

The Works
or
Anthony Raphael Mengs
First Painter to his Catholic Majesty

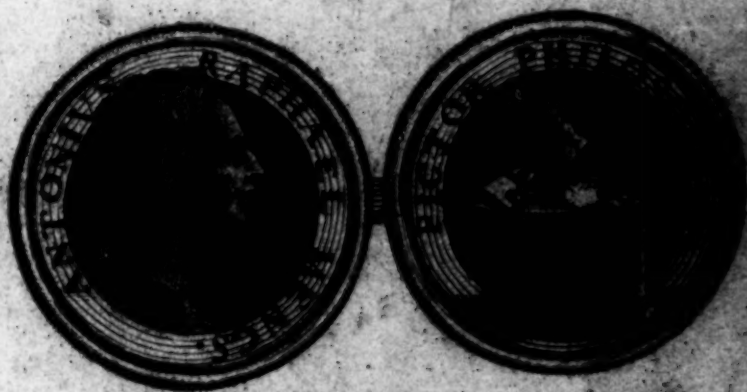
CHARLES III.

Translated from the Italian

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PREFACE.

I SHOULD not attempt to write a preface to the following Translation, were it not to apologize for so arduous an undertaking, which I am truly sensible required a man of great talents and no inferior erudition; but the love I have for the Author, both as a writer and an artist, made me hazard this feeble exposition of his abilities, in hopes of being of service to young students who cannot read his works in the languages of the original publications, and with the desire of giving pleasure to others who for mere amusement may peruse this Translation, which certainly will contain matter truly interesting either to the Literati, the Artist, or the Amateur.

Mengs, as an Author, is justly admired by all those who have read his works in the languages in which they have been published, namely, in the Spanish and Italian, by the same Editor, the Chevalier Don Joseph Nicholas D'Azara, Spanish Minister

at Rome. As an Artist, no unprejudiced person can ever have seen his best works without speaking of him with the greatest rapture and delight.

I have visited the capital of Spain where the paintings of Mengs appear in all their greatness; and every one who has travelled through Spain must be sensible how high a fame he bears in that Country, where not to admire him (as an ingenious author has observed) is almost a violence against Church and State; an enthusiasm supported not by the wild rumor or folly of a day, but authorised by men of undoubted taste and knowledge in the profession. Almost every court in Europe has wished to possess some paintings from his hand. Poland raised and supported him as long as it was able to support itself; Rome acknowledges him as her greatest ornament; Russia, Naples, Florence courted him; and Spain looks on the ever-living monuments of his departed genius with all the ardour of religious adoration: from all these honors one must naturally be led to suppose he was not of the most common and ordinary rank of mankind.

The following works were originally written in various languages, and as the author could not be equally brilliant and correct in all, some parts will undoubtedly be found more excellent than others. The style and clearness of the sentiments must

naturally have suffered, but however, the ideas and profundity of his knowledge in the arts will always appear the same.

His papers were found very confused, and although they were regulated by the Italian Editor with the desire of correctness, yet in reducing the whole to one language, and by apparent confusion in other respects, the sense has been left in some parts very obscure, and the style and phrases, in many places, have remained inelegant.

It has not been my view either to correct the style, or add to the elegance of this work, fearing that by producing a forced or affected improvement, I might have impaired the original ideas of the author, who never wrote any thing without well considering what he wrote, and whose genuine sentiments will be of much more value than all the affectation of a brilliant style, in which, notwithstanding, he will not be found deficient where his original language appears verbatim. I have neither the leisure or abilities to afford me a hope of producing a truly perfect and elegant translation, but an useful and just one is what I aim at, and in which I hope to be successful. I have endeavoured to render the sentiments of the author as plain and intelligible as I am able, and as he confesses to have written this work for Artists, (who are not all Literati) I hope I have pursued the most desirable end. Criticism

will therefore be done away, as my only views in the following translation were those of amusement, and the desire of making the author better known to the English; and at the same time I lament, that no one of superior abilities has attempted it before me, to have done him all the justice he deserves: however, I trust the following translation will be found to contain the original ideas of the author, and that it will convince every one of his abilities as a writer; and his famous piece in All-souls College Oxford will ever be a sufficient specimen to give an idea of him as an artist.*

THE TRANSLATOR,

* The subject of this picture is our Saviour in the garden: it consists of two figures in the foreground, highly finished, and beautifully painted. It was ordered by a gentleman of that College whilst on his travels through Spain; but being limited to the price, he was obliged to choose a subject of few figures. This gentleman relates a singular anecdote of Mengs, which will further show the profundity of his knowledge and discernment in things of antiquity. Whilst an esteemed Author, well known and valued in the Musical World, was abroad collecting materials for his History of Music, he found at Florence an ancient statue of Apollo, with a bow and fiddle in his hand: this, he considered, would be sufficient to decide the long contested point, whether or not the ancients had known the use of the bow. He consulted many people to ascertain the certainty if this statue were really of antiquity; and at last Mengs was desired to give his opinion, who, directly as he had examined it, without knowing the cause of the inquiry,

said "there was no doubt but that the statue was of antiquity, but that the arms and fiddle had been recently added." This had been done with such ingenuity that no one had discovered it before Mengs; but the truth of the same was not to be doubted. Mengs has done but few paintings for England except copies; one however he did for Lord Cooper, another for Sir R. C. Hoare, and a few more for others, of which I shall give an account; and there are a few beautiful portraits and pieces of his in France, which are not mentioned in the list of his Paintings.

PAINTINGS done for England by A. R. MENGES

**The Holy Family, for Lord Cooper, done at Florence:
7 feet by 3.**

Another Holy Family 7 feet by 5.

A Sibyl---- half figure, on canvass.

**Octavian and Cleopatra, with many figures, on canvass;
done for Sir R. C. Hoare.**

A Magdalen half-figure.

**Christ after the Resurrection, with the Magdalen on her
knees; on wood; done for the University of Oxford:**

**A copy of the School of Athens, for the Duke of Nor-
thumberland.**

Portrait of the late Arch-Bishop of Salisbury.

**Andromeda and Perseus, intended for England, but was
taken by a French Privateer, and at last was bought in
France by Mons. de Sartine, minister of the marine.**

**A Sketch in clare obscure of the Resurrection, was inten-
ded for the great painting for Salisbury Cathedral, 30
palms in height. It was begun, but his death prevented
its being finished.**

ENGRAVINGS from his PAINTINGS.

St. John the Baptist, and

**The Holy Mary Magdalen from the originals in possession
of the King of Spain---engraved by Carmona.**

**Our Lord after the Resurrection, when he appears to the
Magdalen; said to be engraved by the same.**

The Madonna and Child, engraved by Volpato.

**The Sibyl half-figure, mentioned above; engraved by
Mosman.**

**Also from a design of his, Christ in the garden, done from
Correggio, engraved by Volpato, which is in the collec-
tion of prints entitled SCHOLA ITALICA PICTURÆ.**

All Souls altar-piece, by Sherwin.

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MEMOIRS

LIFE

ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES,

FIRST PAINTER AT THE CABINET OF

CHARLES THE III KING OF SPAIN.

THE major part of mankind pass their days upon earth, without reflecting even on the blessings and ease of which they partake, much less on the individual, to whose genius, and labour they are indebted for many of their most valuable enjoyments. This almost general ingratitude arises from ignorance, and idleness; it being congenial to our corrupt nature to seek such pleasures only as can be enjoyed without fatigue. Ours is notwithstanding the age in which, more than in any other, mankind have risen from such inactivity, by conquering vice, and making virtue triumphant. This age will perhaps be distinguished by posterity as the age of inquietude in Arts, Sciences, Politics, the fortune of Nations, and of individuals; and lastly of domestic life, all are in continual movement, and agitation. Such activity has necessarily been able to produce an immense display of every kind of useful knowledge,

although allied to indolence, and distaste, the birth of opulence. We have by much extended the superfluous of Science, by rendering it more easy, but in place of this we have lost much of the original ardour and force. Patriotic zeal, and vehement love for the arts, not like their leaders, inflamed the minds of some of the ancients; compared with which ours is a chimera, a folly, a stupidity: Ours is the custom to attempt much, and to be profound in nothing; to be superficially great, but cold and feeble in the execution. Yet in spite of such general relaxation, we see, from time to time, that nature produces some men nervous, ardent, and of a mind so organised as to be able to confront the universal corruption, and by force of study and incredible fatigue, rise to illustrate their professions with all the ancient and true splendor. The major part of their contemporaries alone repay them with the stain of extravagance, others with envy; and the most who pique themselves on bright and enlightened understanding, bestow on them a cold and sterile admiration.

Anthony Raphael Mengs appeared to the world to re-establish the arts. If the transmigration could be admitted, one might say that some genius of Grece in its most florid state, had transfused itself in him; Such was the profundity of his ideas, the elevation of his invention, and the simplicity and candour of his manners. A slave himself to the application of his profession (which he enjoyed through life) he was an enemy to those who were cold and unpassionate, and

much envied by them to whom his merits had rendered him offensive.

The forefathers of Mengs were of Lusatia. His Grandfather was established at Hamburgh, and from thence went to Copenhagen, where the Father of Mengs was born. This being his twentieth child, according to the account of his brothers, he knew not what name to give him, and on opening the Bible, the first name which presented itself was Ismael, which he made choice of. He had for Godfather a Painter of no superior abilities, but this was a sufficient motive for applying the boy's talents to painting. From this inferior school Ismael was soon removed to that of Mr. Coste a Frenchman and the best painter at that court, and procuring some productions of Vandyke from a friend, he acquired by copying him the art of colouring; for which perfection he was remarkable during his life. His master had a niece of whom Ismael became enamoured, but this affected lady not being able to suffer the smell of oil, the good Ismael in obedience to her will, dedicated himself alone to miniature painting, and with such application and success, that in a short time he arrived to great perfection in the art, and then was united to this beautiful, though capricious lady. On account of a contagious distemper, he soon after abandoned that country, and travelled to various courts of Germany, where he acquired the difficult art of painting in Enamel, for which he was ever after very famous.

From this alliance our Mengs was born, in the city of Ausig, in Bohemia, the 12th. of March 1728,

and to whom was given the names of Anthony, and Raphael, in memory of the two great Painters, Raphael d'Urbino, and Anthony Allegri da Correggio, of whom his father was a passionate admirer. Thus destined for a painter even from his cradle, nothing was ever given to him for his amusement but implements of this nature, such as pencils, paper, &c. and before he had attained his sixth year he was placed to the study of drawing. The first rudiments which his father taught him, were the most simple straight lines, as the vertical, the horizontal, and the oblique, which he practised till he was quite perfect, and from this he proceeded with the same care to the most simple geometrical figures, but always without rule and compass, in order to accustom his eye to exactness. After that he proceeded to delineate the contours of the different parts of the human body, and was obliged to reduce them as well as he was able to geometrical rule; from thence he arrived to join and arrange those parts, and at last to give them their necessary grace and perfection. Then he proceeded to take sketches, and according to the manuscripts left by Ismael, mentioning this particular, it was very difficult to constrain the vivacity of his son who was not willing to subject himself to a certain neatness and cleanliness, for which reason he obliged him to draw with Indian Ink, which took from him every possibility of continuing the same error.

In this study he continued for two years, after which he began to paint in oil. His father then seeing the great talent which he displayed,

sought every means strongly to impress in him the first principles of the art, and made him return again with the greatest attention and proximity to the study of drawing. At the same time he taught him Chymistry, in which he was the most intelligent in Europe; and to paint in enamel, and miniature. This however did not interrupt his study of drawing, since not a day passed in which he did not delineate two intire figures of Raphael, or of Caracchi, and not to lose a moment of time he studied likewise perspective, and the most necessary parts of Anatomy. Although at Dresden, where he was at that time, yet he did not think it necessary to study this Science upon dead bodies, but contented himself to learn it from books, and from the dry bones of skeletons. After this study he began to draw antique figures by parts, the same size of the originals, which his father had brought from Rome; and by night copied by artificial light, models in miniature of the same statues. By this method he put in practice that which he had learnt from perspective, and anatomy, such as the degradation and diminution of the members, and the variation of form of the muscles when in action. He still improved himself in studying the effect of light, of its degradation, upon shade, and of reflection, the which things he distinguished better by artificial light, than by that of the sun, and thus repeating the same operation in different places, he comprehended better the force of the

light and shade. In this manner he employed his time to the age of twelve years.

His father then seeing that he studied with reflection, and that it was time to form in him a just taste, which was not to be obtained out of Italy, he resolved to conduct him to Rome, which he did in the year 1741. The young Mengs remained astonished at sight of such beautiful objects which that capital afforded of the arts, and wished to embrace the whole, but was restrained by his father, who made him study the most perfect although the most difficult, such as the Laocoon, the Torso of Belvidere, and the works of Michael Angelo in the Chapel Sistina. After having made him study these in the different modes, he removed him to the chambers of Raphael to practice the most beautiful heads, and dressed figures, in order to learn the taste of Drapery, for which Raphael is so excellent. Ismael was at that time Painter to Augustus 3d. King of Poland, and being very desirous to send him some essay of the abilities of his son, he made him copy in miniature, two pieces of Raphael, which were in the Novitiate, and in the Profession House, then belonging to the Jesuits, and wishing at the same time to send to His Majesty a painting in enamel, sufficiently large of the same kind, he ordered his son to begin a drawing of his own invention, which the father executed to a certain point, and then left it to his son to give it the finishing hand. Never did a work of that kind receive more admiration, as Ismael was the best painter in enamel

ever known even to this day, and his works have been ever considered as invaluable for his beautiful colouring, and practice in the Art. His only misfortune was not having had in his youth a better school for painting, which he was sensible of, and for that reason he urged his son so much to the study of the first principles. Till now we behold Ismael directing the studies of his Son, and giving him that education which has contributed so much to his progress in the arts, and conduct through life; we shall then proceed to treat likewise of his character. A man more severe and rigid to his children never was known. He exacted from them the most indefatigable labour, without ever allowing the least moment of recreation. They were at this time grown up and had never had any intercourse with the world, or scarcely spoken with familiarity to any persons except their family; so much so, that many people with whom Ismael was in the habits of intimacy, were quite ignorant of his having a family. His passion for music only could soften him so as to admit to his house a certain gentleman of the name of Annibale, well known and justly esteemed at the court, and who by a singular contrivance (as we shall see) made known to the King of Poland the merits of the young Menges. When he went from home, he always left his children shut up in the house, and on his return strictly examined if they had performed the task imposed on them to execute during his absence. His chastisement was more like a severe master than a father. He was a perfect tyrant in his house. In Rome he

continued the same conduct. Having conducted our young Anthony to the Vatican, he would there order him what he was to accomplish in that day, and with a flask of water, and a little bread would leave him embroiled with the fatiguing task he had to study. After which Hsmael would return to reconduct him to the house, where he made him render account of what he had done, and one might well suppose the examination was sufficiently rigid. This sort of study rendered him so reflective that he could form a history of all the thoughts of Raphael. To hear him describe the beauties of the different paintings in the aforesaid chamber, one would suppose it was Raphael himself who was giving the description. From the style in which one part was painted he demonstrated that from which the Author had founded his original idea; and from thence he discovered his first design. Then following that which was executed in another style, he pointed out the motives the painter necessarily must have had in making those changes.

He marked the changes and corrections from which he drew those reflections, and finishing to review the picture, one had the perfect history of what ideas occupied the mind of Raphael in the execution of that work. Mengs explained the whole with reasons, and observations, so clear and evident, that the understanding was compelled to render him the credit of geometrical demonstration.

This education so favourable for the arts, was

so disadvantageous to the person of our young student, that it implanted in him, such an habitual carelessness for his appearance, that those who knew him not would have taken him for a clown. A perfect ignorance of the world, rendered him almost destitute of common civility in his behaviour; a certain confined manner, which appeared a kind of diffidence, and lastly a negligence of his own interests, were the cause of his own infelicity, and that of his family, whilst he lived.

After three years thus spent in study at Rome he returned to Dresden where he applied himself to painting in crayons, and there painted his own portrait in two different styles of painting, and that of the aforesaid Signor Annibale, by whose means he was made known to that Sovereign. His Majesty being in doubt that a boy of his age could have arrived to such perfection in the arts, ordered that in presence of an Italian paintress, a disciple of the celebrated Rosalba Cariera, he should take the likeness of her husband, which being done, the King remained surprised at such ability, and immediately wished him to paint his portrait, in which Mengs expressed the most perfect resemblance of that nobleness which was the characteristic of this Prince, and for which he merited the greatest esteem.

In the year 1745, the King retired to Poland, on account of the war, and after the peace returning again to Dresden, he desired to have the Portraits of all the family of Mengs, and wished for Anthony to take that of his father; and that

his eldest Sister, who likewise painted very eminently should take his. All were therefore placed in the cabinet of Crayons. Anthony was then chosen Cabinet Painter, with a pension of Six Hundred TALLERI, and a place of habitation, without any other restraint or obligation, than to give the King the preference of those works he might make choice of, for which he would pay such price, as Anthony himself should fix upon them. Anthony did not accept this good fortune without the permission to return again to Rome, a pretention which afforded some scandal to the Count de Bruhl, the most powerful minister that King ever had. He however in place of being offended, approved the idea of the painter, and granted him licence with the greatest good will.

He returned therefore to Rome with his Father, and his two Sisters, and took a house near the Vatican, in order to have the greatest accommodation for pursuing his Ancient Studies. He drew from paintings and statues; frequented the Accademies, and lectures on Anatomy in the Hospital of the Holy Ghost. He drew at the same time some miniatures at the request of his father.

In this exercise he continued four years, after which time he dedicated himself to composition. From one piece of the Holy Family, he met with very great applause. The first personages of the city came to admire it, which rendered our Anthony very famous in Rome, and so much esteemed, that he was requested by the first

people to settle there, offering to obtain permission of his Sovereign, by assigning him a certain number of his works. This offer was gratefully received by Mengs, being thus able to pursue his studies in presence of such marvellous production of the arts as are to be found at Rome; but his father prized greater the advantage of establishing him in Saxony, which he accordingly did. However before parting Anthony married a young lady sufficiently beautiful and respectable, called Margarita Guazzi, which he happened to meet when seeking a model for the head of the Madonna, referred to in the aforesaid picture.

The family thus augmented left Rome at the end of the year 1749 and arrived at Dresden at Christmas. The severe cold of that climate in Winter, and various domestic disturbances occasioned a great melancholy in our Mengs. His father in continuation of his cruel despotism, seized on the whole property which was in the house of his Son, even to the last penny; after which he turned him out in the street, without either goods or money. Some friends, and particularly his good friend Annibale (who to the end of his days proved his faithful friend) assisted him by their generosity; but above all the King, and his Son the electorate Prince, consoled him by assigning him a comfortable habitation and a carriage. He applied likewise for the title of first Painter to the King, which was granted to him very graciously in place of Mr. Silvestre, who retired to Paris; and the King increased his pension to one

thousand Talleri without any obligation. From that time numerous were the priviledges, and honors, which that Sovereign and the Royal Family bestowed upon Mengs; and to prove his goodness of heart, he never after would speak of that court, but in expressions of the highest sense of gratitude. The King Augustus having at that time built a church of tolerable size in the palace, which was consecrated in the year 1751, wished Mengs to paint a piece for the high altar and for the other two at the sides. He executed the two last at Dresden, but for that of the high altar, he asked permission to go to Rome to finish it there, as much from the motive of reestablishing his health, which was much impaired by this rigid climate, as for the perfection of this work, which he was better able to execute in that country so congenial to the arts. His Majesty well understood the difference of the countries and being instructed in the history of Painters, knew what advantages were to be found in Italy for perfecting their works; therefore instantly granted him the licence he required.

In the spring of 1752, Mengs returned again to Rome with his wife, and a daughter born at Dresden; the which is at present wife to Don, Manuel Carmona, a celebrated Engraver at Madrid. The climate of Rome soon reestablished his health, and the satisfaction of finding himself again in the centre of the arts, furnished him with spirits equal to the task of the most arduous undertaking.

The first work which he finished was a copy of

the great painting of Raphael, called the School of Athens, for Lord Northumberland. He accepted this commission only to reflect on, and study as much as possible that invaluable painter. In fact he has since confessed that he then found how very imperfectly he had known Raphael before that time.

This copy being finished, he began the painting for the Altar of Dresden with the greatest application and delight. In the mean time arrived the unfortunate intelligence, that the war between the Empress and the King of Prussia, occasioned the invasion of Saxony, and the flight of the King from his states, which proved the interruption of the stipend allowed to Menges. By this news reduced to the greatest misery, he was obliged to accept of the works offered him by different individuals, in order to maintain his family, which every year increased. He therefore thought of making himself better known to the public by means of some work, which he could exhibit in public, and for this reason embraced an opportunity which offered of painting a piece in fresco, which the fathers Celestini wished for the cieling of the church of Saint Eusebius.

The father abbot del Guidice, desiring, what his sect could not find, which was, a painter whose demands were conformable to the little money he had to bestow on him, presented himself to Menges, and made him the proposition, telling him plainly at the same time the little he had to pay him, and THAT HE OUGHT WELL

TO CONSIDER WORKING FOR CHARITY, AS HE COULD ONLY MAKE UP THE EXPENCE OF THE CARPENTERS AND MASONS, AND GIVE HIM TWO HUNDRED SCUDI. In spite of these inadequate conditions, Mengs accepted the undertaking, in order to make himself known, and to exercise a kind of painting which no one in Rome at that time practised; Corrado Giaquinto being then gone to Madrid. When the work was finished it received universal applause, as it was at first held impossible to execute a fresco of that kind; and although the composition was not of the taste of painters of the modern schools, yet, notwithstanding, they were not able to censure it for any essential defects; and it was more esteemed by them than the author himself could have expected.

When he departed from Dresden, the King gave him orders to go to Naples to paint the portraits of all the Royal Family, forbidding him to take any recompence. This were well whilst the pay of that court was continued, but being affrayed by the aforesaid changes, and without hope that they would soon be accommodated, he was forced to think after another manner; so that the Duke de Cerisano, minister from that court then at Rome, being desirous of those portraits, he gave him a note of the prices he was to have received for them in Saxony, protesting besides that he had a contrary order from his Sovereign. The answer he received was that the Queen had said he was exorbitant in the price which he demanded for those portraits, and that it was not necessary

he should execute them. Thus we behold one of the many traits which the envy of the artists of the court have invented against Menges; who from his own character, being honourable and sincere, was incapable of judging the reverse of others, therefore guarded not against their machinations. The sequel of which was, that the King of Naples having commissioned him to execute a painting for the Chapel of Caserta, and having advanced him three hundred Zecchini, the half of its price, he received a letter from his Majesty's first Architect, in the which he informed him, that he might take his leisure in finishing that painting, for that it would not be required for many years. A short time after, the Count de Lagnasco, Minister of Poland at Rome, went to Naples, and assured Menges, that the Queen was very much surpris'd at him, that after she had granted him all that he had demanded he had not finished the portraits; and that not having in consequence wish'd to receive the other paintings for the Chapel of Caserta, she had employ'd other painters. This was sufficient to teach Menges, the secrets of the rage of emulation, and how easy it was to abuse authority the most respectable.

In order to oppose the effect of this calumny Menges finish'd this painting with haste, and presented it to the King, at the time when he was departing for Spain to take possession of that Kingdom on account of the death of his brother Ferdinand the sixth. His Majesty was pleas'd with it in the highest degree, and commission'd him

to take the portrait of his Son, whom he left King of Naples. Notwithstanding to accomplish which, he encountered many difficulties, occasioned by those who presided at the Court, and who gave him to understand, that he would do well to depart from that Capital.

Returning to Rome, he undertook to paint the cieling of the gallery of the Villa of Cardinal Alexander Albani, in which he represented Apollo with the Goddess of Memory and the Muses their offspring. In this work, he availed himself much of that which he had observed in the paintings of Herculaneum, to be seen in the Portico Museum: he attached a piece in continuation to this painting, to avoid the great error in works of this kind, which is, to terminate of itself as is the modern custom; for by this method he avoided the disagreeable breakings off or curtailings, which always destroy the beauty of the figures. Nevertheless, not to controvert entirely that mode, he painted the two pieces laterally, where entered only one figure to each, terminating according to the modern taste.

He painted at the same time various pieces in oil for different persons. One was, Cleopatra supplicating at the feet of Caesar. Another was, A Madonna and Child, with Saint John and Saint Joseph; likewise three half figures for England; and a Magdalen whole figure for the Prince of San Gervasio at Naples.

At this time arrived at Rome a Mr. Webb, a young English Gentleman on his travels; who not having any further knowledge of the Arts,

than a little which he had acquired by studying the Greek and Latin Authors at College, from whence he had recently departed, and being very desirous to distinguish himself, he procured an introduction to Mengs, who, discovering in him a great love for antiquity, soon became so attached to him, that he treated him with the same attention as if he had been his Son, and communicated to him all he knew of his art; and gave him a Copy of his Treatise upon BEAUTY, and of his reflections upon the three great Painters. On returning to his country, Webb immediately published his treatise upon painting; which is nothing more than the entire system of Mengs, ornamented with some passages of Pausanias and Pliny; and this without even mentioning the source from which he had derived his knowledge; and in order the more to hide his plagiarism, he advanced, that at that time there was not one Painter of sufficient merit, or any person who could have noticed the ideas to which he gave light.

Mengs smiled when Mr. Marron, myself, and others, informed him of this extravagant production:

WEBB'S INQUIRY INTO THE BEAUTIES OF PAINTING.

Winkelman writing to Mr. Usteri in the year 1761, expresses himself in the following terms of that Author:

“Je suis charmé que ma memoire soit meilleure que la votre au sujet de l'ouvrage Anglois. Je vous ai marqué dans le temps, que

“ ce qu'il y a de meilleur dans ce livre est tiré
“ d'un manuscrit sur la Peinture que Mengs
“ communiqua à l'Auteur, que j'ai beaucoup
“ connu. Cependant le Fat ose avancer qu'il
“ n'y a point de Peintre que soit en état de
“ faire par lui même les observations qu'il don-
“ ne tandis que c'est de Mengs qu'il a em-
“ prunté ces observations.”

“ I am happy that my memory is better
“ than yours, with regard to that English pub-
“ lication. I have remarked to you, that the
“ best parts of that book, are drawn from a ma-
“ nuscript, which Mengs communicated to the
“ Author, and with whom I have been well ac-
“ quainted. Notwithstanding, the Fop dares
“ to advance, that there is no Painter who
“ has abilities sufficient of himself to make the
“ observations which he gives: at the same
“ time, it is from Mengs that he has derived all
“ these observations.”

At this time, Mengs thought to be able to fix himself in Rome; when Charles 3d. who by accident had penetrated into his merit at Naples, invited him by means of Don Manuel de Roda, then his Minister at Rome, to come to Spain, and be in his service; offering him a salary of two thousand Doblones, a House, Carriage, and all the expences attending his profession; and in case he would accept it, he offered him likewise the accommodation of a Ship of war then at Naples, which was about to return to Spain. Mengs therefore embarked with his

family, and happily arrived at Alicant, the 7th day of October 1761.

Having reached the Court, the King received him with such kindness as astonished him; and the same attention he ever after continued, notwithstanding all the trammels and arts of envy which were practised against him.

When he arrived at Madrid, the King had in his service Corrado Giaquinto, the best painter in fresco at the School of Naples; and Giambatista Tiepolo, the best at Venice.

In spite of these obstacles, Menges produced his first work, and notwithstanding he did not resemble the others, all the nation proclaimed him a great Painter, which he certainly was. But the same emulation had enjoyed similar applause, empowered with more security, and this was the cause of preparing more evils for Menges. The number of his works done in fresco and in oil in Spain are incredible for the time, and the poor state of health which he enjoyed. I shall give notwithstanding in continuation to these memoirs, an account of the whole, contenting myself for the present, to cite the principal ones, in pursuing the narrative of his life.

He began, by painting the cieling of the King's Chamber, in which he represented an assemblage of the Gods, and displayed in it the most sublime expression and purest harmony. His colours were the most soft and lively, in which no other Painter has ever equalled him. The ignorant at the same time that they remained enchanted with the picture, called it cold and inanimate in

its composition, because they were accustomed to judge of glaring pieces, and to employ little or no reason to enforce their contempt or admiration. That repose in the figures, and that character of divinity which hides all imperfections; and human necessity, could not move them to take from the legerity of Giordano, and the unconnectedness of Corrado.

In the apartment of the Dowager Queen, at present occupied by the Infanta Donna Josepha, he painted Aurora in the same style of Beauty; and it appeared, that the Graces, in reward for having been painted by him so delicately in the first ceiling guided his hand to represent the Wife of Titon. In the four façades he painted the Four Seasons of the Year, in such beautiful and just-allusions, that the imagination must be immediately stricken with them.

In the apartment of the Princess, he finished four paintings of the four parts of the day, Morning, Noon, Evening and Night, and with the same effect of beauty and grace which characterized his other works. All returned to that chamber destined for the Princess, who was the joy and delight of the Nation. For the Altar of the private Oratorio of his Majesty, he painted in Fresco, the Holy Family, in the short space of eight days, and by this painting, plainly evinced to what perfection he had arrived in his profession, since he knew how to unite the quickness and expedition of Giordano, with the beauty and correctness of Raphael.

At that time he had already painted various pieces in Oil for the King and Royal Family; and his Majesty, whose fine taste for the Arts never decreased, made him finish the whole apartment where he slept, even over the doors of the chamber. I shall just speak of the dispositions of these works, as the most singular ever known. Every Painter is distinguished by some particularity, which stamps the characteristic of his works; Apelles for his grace, Aristides and Raphael for expression, Correggio for light and shade, Titian for colouring, &c. But to possess all these talents, and to produce equal beauty in every style, and to conduct the whole with the same philosophy, was reserved alone for Menges.

Whoever views his excellent paintings, will never believe that the same hand painted the whole. The generality of his works inspire a tender melancholy, and sympathetic sadness. His ordinary mode of colouring, resembles the Doric style in Music and in Architecture; and every figure shows the degree of colouring which corresponds with its character. In his dead Christ, one beholds a corpse after infinite sufferings, but still one distinguishes a perfect body, in its beauty divine. He does not disfigure it with tears and with blood, as other painters of fame have done, and who have employed all their study to paint a form the most frightful and horrible. These are an ignorant people, who labour for the material senses of others, fully ignorant as themselves. Menges was a Phi-

losopher and painted for Philosophers. The Virgin on foot, with her eyes directed to Heaven appeared to offer to her Maker a sacrifice of the deepest contrition that human nature could suffer. That extatic posture, immoveable, the raised and falling hand, the muscles of the face convulsed, and lastly, her blue mantle, and livid vest, corresponding with her pallid face, form an expression which one cannot behold without the most interested attention.

In his Magdalen, sorrow is painted the most natural to human nature ; at the time when she is intirely occupied in the care of the deceased, a torrent of tears stream from her beautiful eyes to indicate the tenderness of her heart.

Saint John with the muscles of his face swelled, and his eyes impregnated with blood instead of tears, expresses the intense sufferings which a robust youth is capable of supporting, without bursting out into complaints or any violent agitations. A servant carrying a vase of aromatics to the Sepulchre, stops to contemplate that spectacle, and justly expresses that natural stupidity, which he mechanically and disinterestedly felt. The other figures express the pain which ought to be mechanically proved : and that part which describes the country and place of passion, is only marked, not to divert the sight from the principal action ; but the whole justly expresses the horror of the scene, in which has suffered the Sovereign of the Universe. This painting ought to be called the painting of philosophy, and with more truth than of the paint-

ing of the Ruin of Troy, in the time of the Carthaginian Juno, one might say *SUNT LACRIMÆ RERUM, ET MENTEM MORTALIA TANGUNT.*

At the same time that Menges was occupied in adorning the Palace of his Sovereign, he sought also to render himself useful, by establishing a School of the Arts in Spain, and proposed to the Academy of which he was a Member, various regulations according to his sublime ideas, which were at first accepted; but ignorance and passion so predominated, that they were not afterwards put in practice, or followed; instead of which, they retorted with disgust on the whole of his projects, and even threatened his reputation. We shall therefore draw a veil over this scene of human frailty, and hide it in forgetfulness for the honor of humanity.

Affliction of mind, (the privation of every delight in life) and disordinate application to his profession compleatly impaired his health.

At the dawn of day he began his labour, and without interruption, except to dine, he continued till night; then taking very little food he shut himself up in his house, at some other work, either in drawing, or preparing materials for the following day. He had sent his family to Rome, and was by this deprived of the greatest comfort and delight he could enjoy. This increased his infirmity; he lost his appetite and fell into a decline, when every one expected his death as near approaching. In this state the King granted him licence to return to Rome, but not being able to support so fatiguing a

journey, he was obliged to rest at Monaco, where the abilities of a Physician and the goodness of the air recruited his strength sufficient to proceed.

Being arrived, he soon recovered his spirits, and became sufficiently reestablished in his health. Here he finished a painting of Christ, and a Magdalen in the situation of *NOLI ME TANGERE*. After which he undertook for the King, another piece much larger, of the Nativity. In this he had in view to combat with Coreggio in his famous Night: posterity will judge if he succeeded. As the painting of the Deposition expressed all the scene of sublime grief; this to the contrary, portrayed the most brilliant beauty that the senses of reason could enjoy.

In this we behold no other light than that which beams from the Son of God; and this is illuminated, in such a manner that it appears as if the light could penetrate within the figures. Their flesh appears so natural and perfect, that if Titian himself had wished to have produced an equal painting, he would not certainly have chosen his figures with that propriety which Mengs has done. The Virgin, is not a beautiful Villager, like that which Raphael has made choice of in a similar case, who never exalted his character above the most beautiful that are to be found in nature; Mengs knew how to figure an heroical beauty, between the divine and human. Among the Shepherds in this picture is likewise his portrait.

He finished purposely for the King two small paintings, St. John, and a Magdalen, which have been engraven by his son in law Carmona.

At that time Pope Clement 14th proposed to him to paint some things for the Vatican. This was ever his most anxious desire, to leave something in memory of himself in that great emporium of the Arts; he therefore quickly accepted the proposal, but with injunction that nothing should be spoken to him of recompence.

He undertook therefore the painting of the Cabinet of the Museum, which was designed in the Vatican to keep the fragments of Ancient PAPIRI.

In this painting, in the centre of the ceiling, he represented the same Museum, and in it History, who writes her memoirs on offended Time. Janus is on one side, and a Genius is on the other in the act of carrying to the Museum some rolls of parchment. Fame flying, announces to the world that Museum, and without being so horrible as the sister of Enceladus, one knows nevertheless to be *PEDIBUS CELEREM, ET PERNICIBUS ALIS*. The composition and colouring, which was the most brilliant and sweet that could be in oil, the enchantment of light and shade, the expression, and certain harmony and repose which attracted and fixed the sight, rendered this painting, without any exaggeration, the first fresco in the world.

Over the door were Moses and St. Peter seated in a Niche, accompanied by the Genii. In the physiognomy of the first, one beholds the confi-

dent authority of the Legislator of God, and in the second, Faith, who examines not. He painted the last in distemper not to damage with the cement of the fresco, the gilding which was made for the ornaments.

The four Genii in the niche are of an ideal beauty so sublime, that one never tires to view and admire them. The ornaments likewise of this superb Cabinet, are of his designs, and directed by him; and allude to the Egyptian arts: Papiri being the manufacture of that country. Marble, Bronze, and Architecture have all the same allusion: the floor only is that which was not designed by Mengs.

He had been near three years in Italy before he had finished this work, and was perfectly re-established in his health; in consequence he had no reason for remaining so long without giving an account to the King, who nevertheless continued him his stipend the same as if he had remained at Madrid. He had besides undertaken this work of the Papiri without leave and even without his knowledge. Any other sovereign but Charles 3d. would have resented this abuse of his bounty; but his unwearied patience contented itself to make me search reservedly the motives which detained Mengs at Rome: I represented to his Majesty the truth, excusing Mengs on account of his passion for Rome, the centre of the polite arts; likewise for the tenderness he bore his family, from whom he had not the courage to separate himself; and for his ambition (so excuseable in an artist of

his merit) to leave some testimony in memory of his abilities, with those of Raphael; and lastly relieved his delicacy, by saying he had sought nothing from any other sovereign since he served the King of Spain, promising at the same time what I would do in order to induce him soon to depart for Madrid.

At the indirect insinuation I gave him he was uneasy and resolved precipitately to leave incomplete the work of the Papiri, and to depart immediately. No reflection was capable of diverting him from this resolution. He went first to Naples to take the portraits of those Sovereigns according as he had promised the King their father; but instead of finishing them both according as he had determined before he left Rome, he entertained himself in Naples all the winter, and returned to Rome with only the heads finished; and being arrived he could not resist the desire of completing what remained to be done in the Chamber of the Papiri; and it was then that he finished the painting of the aforesaid Saint Peter.

At last he left Rome to return to Spain with part of his family, leaving his five daughters in a Convent, recommended to his Brother in law, the celebrated Painter Signor Marron. Four months after passing through Florence to go to Parma, I found him at that place not having the resolution to proceed any further, and on my return two months after, he was still remaining there. During my short stay at Florence, he drew my portrait, and his friendship

for me made him perform wonders in the execution. I returned to Rome, and five months after passing again by way of Florence, I induced him finally to depart for Spain. He left in that city two paintings, one for the Grand Duke and the other for the Grand Dutchess. The first represented the Virgin and Child, and Saint John, with two Angels at their side, all in little more than half figures; the beauty of which images enchanted every one intelligent in the art, as well as those who were not artists. All is fancy: Nature could not have offered objects so beautiful. The other painting is Saint Joseph awaking, and it is impossible to express better the effect of sleep; at the same time, one beholds a man in all the agitation of disturbed rest. Before parting from Florence, he finished the portrait of the Cardinal Zelada, which he had begun in Rome, and likewise another little work.

In this year which Mengs remained in Italy, he studied, or more properly speaking, meliorated much his style. His former works bear no comparison with those he did after that period. The most serious study of the ancients, and especially the paintings of Herculaneum manifested to him the true fountain of Beauty, and the way by which the Grecians had attained it. In his first works, notwithstanding his corrections, his coloring and his harmony, one discovers at the same time study and labour; in his last works, all is facility and grace, and appears the effect of the hidden and insensible force of

nature. His *Clare Obscure* has more vigor, and the effect of reflective light, and his perspective sky, bear an allusion which one does not find in any other Painter.

In that style he painted at Madrid the grand Saloon where the King dines; and this work alone is sufficient to establish him the reputation of one of the first Painters. Upon the dining table of his Majesty, he painted the Apotheosis of Trajan, a Spanish Prince, and the best that ever occupied the Throne of the Cæsars, and the model of that Trajan who now reigns in Spain.

In front is the temple of Glory, to which all the Virtues lead, who unite in the composition: but this painting, and all the others which Menges left in Spain, I shall mention in the account which I shall give of them apart.

In the private theatre of the Princes at Aranjuez he painted the ceiling, in the middle of which Time irritated seizes on Pleasure, from whose head drops a garland of flowers. This fancy is one of the most graceful ever produced by Menges. In the expression one beholds the abuse of Time, and the precept to profit oneself of it. The rest of the ceiling is filled up by *CARIATIDES*, in *clare obscure*, which will ever be a monument and school of design of that great man.

It seems impossible that in little more than two years from the time Menges was returned to Madrid, he could have painted so many things. This surprise however ceases, when we consider the application and incessant

labour of that man, whose whole pleasure during life, was painting and study; from which attention nothing could ever divert his mind.

But this fatigue injured his health, and moved the King to condescend to his desire of once more returning to Rome, the centre of his delight. His Majesty treated him with that generosity which is peculiar to him; leaving him at full liberty with the pay of three thousand Scudi, and one thousand more to divide in dowers among his Daughters.

We again behold Mengs in Rome surrounded by his family, and with a reputation established throughout the world, and with a fortune sufficient to relieve him from the necessity of searching a subsistence by his labours. It appears then, that he ought to have been the most happy and tranquil man in the universe: he was notwithstanding entirely the contrary. In a short time he lost his Wife, whom he adored, as an example of virtue and affection. From that time he became entirely changed both in manner and in disposition, being one continual scourge to himself and those around him. His former complaints relapsed and increased. The impression of the cold, which in the nights of that winter was excessive, made him give into the other extreme, by living and painting in rooms shut up from every circulation of air, and heated by stoves and immense fires. This excessive heat, rarified, and dried the air more than was proper for natural perspiration. His lungs therefore lost their elasti-

city, and received the prejudicial emanation of an infinity of mineral tinctures united with the ambient heat.

I have many times been deprived of his company from not being able to raise my head in the pestilential atmosphere of his apartment. When he painted in fresco it was even worse, because he put his scaffold in a posture forced against the ceiling, by which he respired the arid poisons of the cement and the minerals which they use in that kind of painting. His lymph or fluids thickened in such a manner, as no longer to nourish his blood. His muscles and veins lost their elasticity; he almost entirely lost his voice; a dry cough tormented him, and his appearance was quite that of a lifeless corpse. The Physicians not knowing what other term to give his complaint pronounced him phthical.

Notwithstanding the deplorable state of his health, his weakness did not interrupt a day of his labours. He finished a painting of Andromeda and Perseus, began some years before, in which he expressed the true heroic Grecian character; a character whose beauty was not to be enjoyed by the vulgar and ignorant.

This work destined for England, was taken by a French vessel, and it is not known to this day what became of it after.

At the last moments of his life, he finished a pencil drawing, of the Deposition, in a different manner from that which is in the King's chamber, and in spite of the repetition of the same subject, he knew how to vary the

composition and expression in such a manner, as can hardly be expressed. The greatest Philosophers since the days of Socrates, have not expressed the emotions of the mind with that propriety and ardour, nor so justly as Mengs has portrayed them in the compass of this single painting of two colours only. Even at the time I am now writing the description, all Rome is admiring that prodigy of the Art, and the Marquis Rinuccini of Florence, has offered one thousand Scudi for that drawing and has obtained it.

Before Mengs departed the last time for Spain, he had a commission to furnish a painting for the basilick of St. Peter, in the place in which is the fall of Simon Magus by Vanni.

The enterprize was dangerous, from the disgrace another Painter met with who is yet living, and who saw his work rejected from thence. Being returned to Rome Mengs thought of undertaking this painting, notwithstanding the impertinent petulance of the person charged with the affairs of that Church. He then thought of changing the subject of the painting for that of the consignment of the Key to St. Peter; the more so, on account of its being the most important circumstance in the life of that Saint, and the foundation of that grand temple, and of many other things, which no painting had ever represented. All the Painters who have treated on this subject, have expressed the allegory of the words of Christ, with the keys of a Magazine or Granary in his hand with

material embarrassment. Mengs, all sublime and spiritual in his ideas, devised in that history, Christ, who with one hand confirms St. Peter, and with the other raised, points to him the Father Everlasting, who from a throne of Majesty, orders his Angels to descend, and carry to St. Peter the keys, the which do not make the principal subject, and at the same time it appears, that he writes with his finger upon a table of marble which is supported by his Ministers, *QUODCUNQUE LIGAVERIS SUPER TERRAM, &c.* The sublimity in the expression of the Father, manifests him the Creator of all things: In Christ one beholds bounty and love: In St. Peter, the most lively and determinate faith: In the croud of the Apostles, every one corresponds with the circumstance of his estate.

The intelligence of the composition, the repose of the sight, the propriety of the drapery, the ease of the folds, and the contrast between the seriousness of those adorned in cloathing, and the gay and sprightly nudity of the Angels of Glory, prove well that Mengs destined this painting as a competition with those wonders of the Art which are to be found in that Temple.

Notwithstanding this, he has left only one sketch sufficiently finished in clare obscure, the height of five palms, which perhaps because it was not of the ordinary composition, has not been made choice of by people of distinction, and probably will fall into the hands of some profligate.

I now come to the last work, in which Mengs deposited the very essence of his talent, and even surpassed himself. The King having commissioned him for three large paintings, for the new Chapel at Aranjuez, he began by the principal one, which represented the Annunciation. After having laboured two months to meditate and design that painting, in the morning that he began it, I was present with Mr. Hevvetson a very eminent Sculptor; we found him whistling and singing alone, and demanding the reason, he replied, that he was practising a sonata of Corelli's, because he wished to finish this painting after the style of Music of that great Composer. The modern Painters who receive applause from those who arrogate the title of intelligent men, will laugh perhaps, to hear of a painting being designed from a Sonata; but very otherwise will think those who know the true fundamentals of their profession, and have studied the Grecians more than the first have done.

There is no doubt but painting much resembles music; the one and the other are arts of imitation; their object is beauty, and their perfection is harmony. A sound when it is not grand is only a simple imitation, nor is a painting beautiful when it imitates only one single object: both would be a faithful copy and no more. Music may delight the ear, but as Plato says in his second book of Laws, only that is praise worthy which expresses Beauty, and ought not to be enjoyed alone from being heard, but more from the reasons of good and intelligent

men. The laws which he calls *CITHARÆDICE*, do not permit the Greeks to use any other style of music but that which receives a subject, and by analogy they applied the denomination of music to other things; as we see in Diogenes Laertius, who to denote the simple and serious dress of Polemone, says, that it resembled the Doric style in music.

Menges who had penetrated into the delicacy of the Grecian taste, knew, that in rural subjects, the pastoral ought to employ the peonian or flowry style, and not the dithyrambic or licentious. In a feast of Bacchus, the latter was admissible and not the former. In a Deposition should be found the Doric style, and in a Nativity or Annunciation, the chromatic, the cheerful, and the graceful kind. Menges being in his character noble and elevated, abhorred every base and low argument. He could not endure the burlesque or comic music, the childish passages, and much less the ridiculous grotesque, and Arabesque, of which he thought like Vitruvius, Pliny and other ancients.*

* Nothing ever moved so much the indignation of the good Vitruvius, as that depraved taste for the Grotesque and Arabesque. What that venerable author advances, may perhaps properly serve to expose that corruption in painting, which some have adopted in these latter days, excusing themselves by the example of Raphael.

“The good paintings of the ancients (says he) which were copied from real subjects, are now, from a depraved custom disused; since they paint at present imaginary monsters, in preference to existing things. Thus in place of columns they substitute reeds, and for pediments, fluted arabesque, ornamented with rich foliage of young shoots and branches, or candlesticks, which support the figures upon the pediments of

In fact those things speak only to the senses; but solemn music, and serious painting, fly heroically to the regions most purified; and excite sublime ideas which aggrandize and improve our nature. In a word, the first is all material, the

“small houses; and many tender stalks, which springing from the
 “roots, voluptuously incircle without rule the sedentary figures;
 “as also flowers, which issuing from the stalks, terminate in half
 “busts, many in human effigy, others in that of beasts, such un-
 “natural things as never had a being, nor ever can, or ever will
 “have. In spite of which, this new custom has so prevailed,
 “that from ignorant false judgment, is despised the true value of
 “the Arts. How can one imagine a reed to support a roof, or a
 “candlestick a house, with all the ornaments of the roof, or
 “that a stalk thus weak and tender, can sustain a sedentary figure,
 “and that from the same root it can produce half flowers and half
 “figures? Notwithstanding men behold the visible incongruity
 “of these things, yet they do not correct them, but instead of
 “which they are still pleased with them whether they have a
 “natural existence or not: thus the mind destroyed by false
 “judgment, no more discerns such direct violation of nature,
 “from that which is drawn with all the rules of reason and de-
 “corum. Never ought we to prize a picture which is not in
 “every respect the similitude of truth; and although it might be
 “painted with excellence, yet one ought not to give it credit,
 “without first discovering in it, clear reason, and that without
 “study or labour.”

The remaining part of his discourse is carried on with equal energy and grace, upon an example of Apaturius Alabandeus, who painted superbly in a theatre of the Trallienses similar monstrosities, which enchanted every one except the mathematician Licinius, who by the force of his reasoning made him destroy that work; and the painter himself had sufficient courage to disapprove of it, and to furnish another according to the rules of nature and truth. Respecting the paintings of landscapes, maritime views, and puerile things which Ludius introduced into Rome in the time of Augustus, one might consult Pliny, lib. 35, cap. 10. where in contrast to those paintings done on walls with such extravagant taste, he praises those of history, which were the only paintings known to the Greeks, and he expresses himself thus: *SED NULLA GLORIA ARTIFICUM EST, NISI EORUM QUI TABULAS PINXERE: EOQUE VENERABILIOR APPARET ANTIQUITAS.*

second is all spiritual, but it is necessary to add the facility of the one, and the difficulty of the other.

The painting of the Annunciation, as I have already said, was begun by Menges according to the character of the music of Corelli, in which the harmony is so well distributed, and one finds the sense so equally and justly raised, that no tone either stronger or weaker can destroy the soft impression of each other; and this so far from any decadence of monotony, that it still attracts the sight with such pleasure that it is with difficulty the eye can be distracted from beholding the object, on account of its ideal beauty; and it appears impossible that the human mind could have been able to elevate itself to such a degree.

In his Madonna one beholds the expression of humility, and modest joy, after the turbulence of past sorrows. The beauty of the angel Gabriel, and of the other angels of the Celestial assembly is correspondent to the characters of the ministers of God, and to the expression of their serious enjoyment at so high an administration. Distinguished above all is the Father everlasting, and as far as little things can give an idea of great ones, and human things of divine, him alone we can conceive as the image of the Omnipotent and Eternal Creator. Michael Angelo and Raphael have always represented him in a fiery and terrible aspect, in dark robes, which gave him a serious air, from which it appears their intention was to excite terror.

Mengs conceived his God to be the Father of Grace, and for that reason adorned him with white cloathing, and gave him an expression of majesty, and bounty to render amiable his empire and power.

This was the last work of our Mengs, and in perfecting which he died, exactly at the time of painting the arm of the angel Gabriel which has the flower-de-luce. Few people know that this work is not finished, although it wants much of that which the author called the finishing grace. Thus finally Mengs died leaving unfinished his Annunciation, as Apelles did his Venus. The one and the other proposed to surpass all their anterior works, but both found themselves incapable of accomplishing it. *APELLES INCHOAVERAT ALIAM VENEREM COIS, SUPERATURUS ETIAM SUAM ILLAM PRIOREM; INVIDIT MORS PERACTA PARTE; NEC QUI SUCCEDERET OPERI AD PRÆSCRIPTA LINEAMENTA INVENTUS EST.* The painting of the Annunciation of Mengs had the same fate of the Iris of Aristides, of the Tindarides of Nicomachus, of the Medea of Ticomachus as well as of the aforesaid Venus of Apelles. All paintings left incomplete by their authors are according to Pliny more estimable than if they were finished; because, *LINEAMENTA RELIQUA; IPSÆQUE COGITATIONES ARTIFICUM SPECTANTUR, ATQUE IN LENOCINIO COMMENDATIONIS DOLOR EST: MANUS CUM ID AGERENT, EXTINGTÆ DESIDERANTUR.* This is not the only circumstance which renders similar these two painters: the first en-

joyed the favour of Alexander; the latter that of Charles the 3d. The one and the other are singular from the grace which impresses their works, which is such as one feels and cannot express, that is, a certain softness of turn, and facility of expression, which will ever be found easy and natural; likewise in choosing those agreeable variations which every part takes when it is shown to advantage; and finally, the natural sweetness and harmony of the composition and colouring. Apelles had the sincerity to confess he was excelled by Amphion in the composition, and by Asclepiadorus in the perspective. Menges was not inferior to him in sincerity, as we shall see by many examples. But certainly those two Grecians were not superior to him either in composition or perspective. The injuries of time have deprived us of the writings of Apelles, and Menges probably will appear more fortunate in having preserved his. Lastly Apelles gave his colours a varnish, which according to Pliny, united the tints and preserved the colours from dust and stains: the varnish used by Menges, was certainly not inferior to that of Apelles, notwithstanding what many inferior ignorant painters have advanced to the contrary.

It will appear perhaps that in these discourses I go on, to avoid the mournful relation of the death of my friend. I confess that my feelings suffer much at the remembrance of the sad scene, for which reason I will give but a short account of that doleful tragedy. Fatigue, added

to his different complaints had reduced Mengs to an extreme state of weakness; however not without hope of recovery, if he could have pursued a life more tranquil and disoccupied. His impatience, joined to a most ardent imagination, made him take faith in a mountebank, a compatriot of his, who promised to cure him in a few days. Thus secretly without consulting any of the faculty, or of his family, he gave him a medicine so violent that it exhausted entirely the little strength which remained in him, and occasioned him various fits, in which he was left for dead. Recovering however from this attack, though badly, he was possessed with a restless desire of changing to another house, molesting all his people to make all enquiries, and to see all the houses that were to be let in Rome. It is to be remarked that at that time he had three houses, one which he built, and two which he rented. Nevertheless, one morning he removed suddenly to a lodging situated in the STRADA CONDOTTI, carrying with him the burthensome weight of all his evils, corporeal and mental; and a few days after he was again removed to the STRADA GREGORIANA, still continuing his clandestine correspondence with the empiric, who had induced him to take certain balsams which a Nun of Narni had distributed with much fame and miracle. In compliance to that work he mixed with it (as was afterwards discovered) a good dose of diaphoretic antimony, which in a little time destroyed that machine already half ruined. In

that manner a Charlatan, and an unfortunate superstition combined to deprive the world of a man worthy of much longer life; for at this time he had attained only fifty one years and three months.

His corpse was interred at the foot of the Janiculum, in the parish of Saint Michael, and at the obsequies attended the professors of the Academy of Saint Lucas. His statue of bronze, which had been modelled under his direction, was afterwards collocated in the Pantheon, by the side of that of Raphael, under which was written the following inscription.

ANT. RAPHAEL MENGES.

PICTORI. PHILOSOPHO.

IOS. NIC. DE. AZARA. AMICO. SVO. P.

1779.

VIXIT. ANN. 51. MENSES 3. DIES 10.

The paintings and writings of Menges, insure him a seat in the temple of Immortality, and his goodness, and bounty, will engrave on the bosoms of his friends an everlasting testimony to his memory.

The life, and studies of this great man, ought to serve as a stimulus to every one who would wish to apply to, and perfect themselves in the noble arts. His father directed him sufficiently well in his infancy, by accustoming his eye to exactness; but I have heard him many times lament having occupied so much time in draw-

* At present it is in marble, having been changed, because the bronze had not a good effect in that place.

ing from prints, which, however good they may be of their kind, always lose by the incision part of the excellence of their originals; their contours are always overcharged, and are wide from that simplicity which characterizes true beauty.

The method to give a scrupulous reason for every thing is necessary, but it ought notwithstanding to be used with discretion, otherwise it accustoms youth to observe too much the minuteness of every little part, and not to attend sufficiently to the grandeur of the whole. He likewise lamented much, that his Father had accustomed him to paint in Enamel, and in Miniature, as it afterwards cost him great trouble to correct the dry, * and minute taste of that species of painting. The truth is that Mengs knew latterly how to liberate himself entirely from that defect which he has plainly shown in those miniatures which he painted by way of complaisance. I do not know however that he finished more than four, three of the which are in my possession.

His veneration for antiquity was great, without being fanatical. Where he found defects he always acknowledged them. To point out the errors, or beauty of a work is this difference; for the one,

* DRY in painting is used metaphorically of those works which want a certain substance and softness, and are as dissected flesh, dry and arid. The rapid passages of one tint to that of another which is different, and lines too exact, take from the beauty of paintings a very great softness, and since miniature is worked by points, which cannot be united in such a way as to make the union imperceptible, it is therefore difficult to paint a miniature which is not DRY.

it is necessary that the eye should be endowed with the illustration of reason, and accompanied by that fine sensibility which is not common to all men. Envy, and malignity, in order to abase the works of others, and to elevate themselves by their ruin, look with piercing eyes after their defects; but he who manifests only the errors, and is silent on the beauties of a work, is either ignorant, or invidious, or perhaps both the one and the other.

None like Menges ever understood and manifested the perfections of the ancient statues. How many times has he contemplated with me the beauties of the sublime Laocoon till he was fired with enthusiasm at its excellence, and on one occasion observed to me that the right tibia of one of his children was much shorter than the other.

On account of having given to the King for his Academy, all the chalk figures of his collection of statues, (a collection which had cost him a sum superior to his finances,) he thought of writing a treatise on the manner of viewing antiquities, and of discovering their beauties; but he feared, that there might be found in Europe, persons, who from some defect, would take umbrage, and declaim against the real merit of these works. Death has therefore deprived the world of this publication, which I am sure would have been a model of sagacity and wisdom. It was him alone who was capable of discovering and demonstrating, as he did in a letter to Monsignor Fabroni, that the group of Niobe was only

an inferior copy of the famous original mentioned by Pliny. His intelligence in antiquities is clear from the following circumstance, I one day found in a cave in the Villa of Pisoni at Tivoli, a head much battered and ill treated, so as one would suppose to be unintelligible, yet as soon as he saw it, he said it was a sculpture of the time of Alexander the Great: A few days after was found the remainder of the inscription, which proved it to be the head of the same Alexander.

Lastly, it is worthy to know, that all the technical parts in the history of the Arts by Winkelman, are of his friend Mengs; which is sufficient to give an idea, how much he had studied the works of the ancients.

I once discovered an ancient house on the mountain Esquilinum with various paintings in fresco: Mengs ran directly to see them; and having determined that they should be engraven, he not only offered to furnish the designs, but he undertook to copy them in small, and with incredible regard and attention, executed the three first, producing three prodigies of the Art, which he generously presented to me. Death prevented his finishing the remainder, which were thirteen of the originals that were discovered.

In this same Cave of Antiquity was found, among other things, a Venus in marble, of a sculpture so perfect, and of a style so excellent, that the enraptured Mengs wished to restore to it with his own hand some parts which it had

lost. In his life he had never used a chisel, yet notwithstanding the great talent and necessary genius required for this science, the marble obeyed him with the same docility and perfection as did the colours in painting, and the Professors of the Art confessed, that, excepting the works of the ancients of the best times, they had never seen sculpture of such correctness, grace, and delicacy. Notwithstanding Menges had satisfied every one besides, he was himself dissatisfied. He had raised to the statue the first leg, and taken the sketch of the rest, which have however remained imperfect to the time of his death; but I have taken care to restore the first, preserving it as an ever valuable treasure of the Art.

Nothing proves more the degree to which Menges arrived in the study of the ancients, than the following fact. It is known to the world, that in Rome, paintings were then sold as stolen from the Herculaneum. Orders were given to find out the thief, who being charged with the fact, declared that the supposed ancient paintings were the works of his own hands, and he dispersed them for antiquities in order to gain the more money for them, and he verified the assertion by painting others in the Jail in imitation of some of the Herculaneum, which he counterfeited wonderfully. He confessed to have done many which the English had bought for originals, and that for such they were then shown in England, and considered as the most precious rarities. He confessed likewise to have sold them in Rome, and that there were

many in the museum of the Roman College, Father Ambrosius, then Jesuit, got engraved many of them for his Virgil, and gave the explanation with great seriousness.

At the same time one Casanovia, pupil of Mengs, produced two paintings of the same ancient taste, and in order to laugh at Winkelman, with whom he was no longer friends, he sent them secretly to him, saying they had been dug up in the vicinity of Rome. The good Winkelman believed it, and gave them a pompous explanation in his first German edition of the History of the Arts; but a little time after, discovering the deceit, the Antiquarian became desperate, and complained bitterly in many letters and journals, and at last had recourse to the lieutenant of the Police at Paris to suppress the prints of them with the explanation translated into French, which were then preparing for impression.

This mode of counterfeiting ancient paintings likewise excited the attention of Mengs. He finished one of the height of six palms, and little less in width, representing Jove seated on a throne, with a pedestal at his feet, embracing Ganymede, who is on foot, with a vase in the left hand, and a bowl in the other. Imagination the most lively could not figure beauty more ideal than that of Ganymede, nor a mass of divinity like that of Jove. Homer himself has not left a description more sublime of the father of the gods and of men, than has the pencil of Mengs in this painting.

The attention with which he painted the an-

cient wall, is astonishing. The crevices are done as if they were really broken in the plaster by the nails, or cramps and screws of the wall. He feigned the parts mended in order to give an idea that the whole was to have been repaired; and the difference between the hand which had executed the repairs, and that which had done the original, seems very visible: all those things shew that art could not do more to give credit to the imposture.

This painting, as well as the two of Casanuova are shown in the house of Mons. Diel of Marfilly. But at the time of his death the Jove was in possession of a Mrs. Smith, who lived with him. How she remained Mistress of that painting I know not; but she some way supported her cause with strong pretensions and succeeded.

Winkelmann took likewise this painting for an antique, and describes it with much erudition in his aforesaid book, nor do I see that he quarrels at the deceit as he did at that of Casanuova. Perhaps the former irritated the pride of Winkelmann, having laboured purposely to surprise his knowledge in the Arts, or perhaps, which is more probable, that he still believed the Jove to be an original till the time of his death.

I know that in the inside of the plastering of the painting, Menges left a mark to demonstrate that this piece was a work of his own hand. But before his death he felt repugnance at having practised that cheat upon antiquity; and to repair what he had done, he recommended so-

riously to his sister Signora Teresa, the wife of Signor Marron, to publish that he was the author of that painting.

Of all the modern painters, Mengs gave the priority to Raphael for design and expression; to Correggio for grace and clare obscure; and to Titian for colouring. The first occupied his understanding, the second his heart, and the third delighted his eye; but he profited of the beauties of all three to form his style: Thus the bee culls from the different flowers their various sweets, to make its honey rarer. It is sufficient to see any one of his paintings to rest convinced of this truth.

Since Raphael possessed the most essential part of painting, which is expression, for that reason Mengs dedicated to him his greatest study; nor ever tired in contemplating his beauties; however there is much variation in the style of these two painters. Raphael knew how to express with his pencil every thing visible in nature, and likewise knew how much the mind influences the body in the movement of the passions. A fine discernment, which no one ever possessed in a higher degree, directed him always to choose the most beautiful passages of nature; but we do not see that he ever elevated himself above it. His Virgins, for example, are always taken from the most beautiful and healthy young women that could be found in his time: they have therefore a physiognomy too common, and nothing divine. The famous Madonna della Seggiola, what is it more than a rustic giving milk

to a beautiful child. Towards the end of his life, when he painted the *Galilee* in the *Farnesina*, it appears by a letter written to the Count Baldassare Castiglione, that he thought of another kind of painting, an ideal, consisting of a judicious choice of the parts dispersed in nature; and by the combination of that choice to form a subject all perfect, superior to nature itself, in imitation of the *Helen of Zeuxis*, who in order to render this painting more perfect, collected and combined the different perfections of many of the most beautiful young women; nor less did Raphael comprehend in what consisted the aforesaid choice. His complaint that in his time beauties were scarce, gives one to understand that he continued the system of copying objects entire, and not of abstracting the beautiful parts. If Raphael had been doomed for longer life he would perhaps have exalted painting to its highest degree of perfection; but this glory was reserved for Mengs. His figures of divinity have the least of human that they can have; of many perfect parts, which he knew how to choose, he formed his compositions, omitting the ignoble, the superfluous, and that which marks the misery of humanity; from whence results that sublime beauty of imagination which characterizes his works.

Raphael, all intent to the sensible expression in his works, appears in some measure to have neglected the bare outline, and colouring. His tints are rough, and the flesh often of a disagreeable red, which every one must discern,

who view not his works with prepossession. His paintings appear to have a disagreeable monotony, and for that reason do not please so much at first sight, but require reflection. The paintings of Mengs unite the most sublime expression to colouring the most just and harmonious, added to a true knowledge of the various effects of light, which enchant the senses at first view, and delight the understanding on further contemplation. They contain, above all, that grace which one feels but cannot express. For this talent Apelles has remained inimitable. The painter D'Urbino copied the most beautiful parts of matter: Our German copied it, meliorated it, and exalted it; the one sacrificed alone to reason, the other to reason and grace.

Many people will certainly hold these propositions of mine as scandalous, thus directly to defraud Raphael of that veneration which has been his tribute for more than two ages past. But nothing will withhold me from manifesting the truth, when I am sensible of it. Whoever wishes to condemn me let him first examine himself to know if he be free from prepossession, and any other little passion less excusable.

The touch of the pencil of Mengs was peculiar to himself. He impasted his paintings with much colouring, by which they received and reflected a greater copiousness of light, and in that he was so delicate that he always prepared his palettes with his own hands. He knew the fundamentals, and chemically the nature of every colour, and the result of their ef-

fect after a length of time, when the oil was exhaled. He perfectly understood the theory of light, and its decomposition by the prism in seven colours; but he followed a different system which he found out by practice. He reduced all the colours to only three, which were yellow, blue, and red, and by the mixture of those three he formed all the rest. Black and white he did not admit as colours; and when he could avoid it he never made choice of any other materials than natural earths. He always preferred to paint upon wood, if it were possible, because the canvass, although it be well pressed, yet it never presents the surface so smooth and united as does the wood, and every little cavity, or relief, however small it may be, produces a false reflection of light; and besides, if the canvass be a little too large it gives under the pencil, and the hand cannot go firm and exact.

Whoever examines his works, will not find the trace of his pencil as in other painters: all is united like truth and nature, which operate not by springs: one tint mixes with another imperceptibly. For that reason the young students, who are put to copy his works, cannot find out how they are done, nor where they are to begin, because they have not the rules which are to be found in others. But what rules? they are receipts rather which serve to apply to every thing. Many evils come from what are called *SCHOOLS*, which in the Arts as well as the Sciences, cannot but produce constant error and ignorance. All the founders

of these seminaries have been men of merit; their disciples have tried to imitate them, and have been successively imitated by others; and since imitation always remains in the rear of an original, the last must necessarily find themselves at such a distance, as entirely to lose sight of their predecessors. This produces absolutely artists by practice, who are what I call **PAINTERS BY RECEIPT.**

Very few among the many writers on the Arts have satisfied Mengs, especially the Authors of the Lives of Painters, and in particular Vasari; because they treat of every thing except what is essential in the Arts. They launch out into a thousand insipid anecdotes of their private and domestic lives, with the useless exactness of the prices and possessors of their paintings. They lavish with a full hand the most exaggerated praise, and in the epithets of miraculous, and divine: These are the substances of the lives of Vasari and his Annotators. That of Correggio is so very unworthy that it induced Mengs to prepare anew a memorandum for a certain collection of the lives of painters, which he had undertaken at Florence, but the Editors made little use of it: indeed it was not fit for the plan which they have executed.

One certain Falconet, a Sculptor, who did the Equestrian Statue of the Czar Peter in bronze, diverted himself by writing two volumes in order to vent his choler against Pliny, Cicero, the Horse of Marcus Aurelius, and the most illustrious ancient and modern writers, and against works of

the highest reputation in the world. Mengs had too much merit to be forgotten in this Philippic, in which he received a full dose from Falconet.

Mengs wrote him a letter sufficiently modest, not to justify his own person, but solely for the honor of the Arts. He had a reply, but the dispute did not go further, either because Mengs did not choose to lose the time, or that because the book was written with too much bitterness and passion to be able to do any injury, especially in Italy, where one cannot impose on the polite Arts, and where criticism and satire please if it be delicate and discreet, but is despised when it flanders with fury and animosity.

Of the modern publication of Sir Josua Reynolds, he said, it was a work which might lead youth into error, because it fixes them upon superficial principles, the only known to that author.

The choleric and arid temper of Mengs made him sometimes appear severe in his manner. In fact, in matters concerning the Arts, he gave his opinion with a sincerity, which appeared severe and rigid; but in the bottom he was the same good man, and repented whenever he learnt that his frankness had given offence; and more, he would assist any one with his councils, or give them instructions, never making any mystery of his art.

Clement 14th having bought, by means of a merchant, various paintings at Venice, and wishing to have the opinion of Mengs, he told him clearly that they were worth nothing, and that he had been deceived. The holy Father replied

to him, that such and such painters had praised them much; to which Mengs answered, N. N. and I are two professors, the one praises that which is superior to his abilities, and the other condemns that which is inferior to his.

Of a Sculptor, who had put his name to a statue of Disinterestedness in the sepulchre of a great Pope, in this manner, N. INVENIT. Mengs said, that he was right in declaring that he had invented it, because certainly he had not taken it from any thing in this world. One might refer to many similar circumstances, were it not to do injury to Artists still living.

The frankness of his manner was certainly singular, and it is well known that his enthusiasm for the Arts extinguished in him, every other passion. His veracity, and the horror he bore towards every species of falsehood, was ever visible in all his actions; for proof of which I shall give only one example of the many which I could adduce.

On entering France by Pont Vauvoisin, the last time he went to Spain, the officers of the Custom house saw that he had some gold boxes ornamented with brilliants, which were given him by different princes. They asked him if he carried them for sale, or for his own use. He replied that he was not a merchant, and that he did not take snuff; with which they were not contented, and insisted that he would reply to the second part of their demand, if they were for his own use, in order that he might be at liberty to take them; but they were

not able to draw from him a word of untruth, that is, to say that he had ever taken snuff, for which reason they were obliged against their will to seize the boxes as vendible goods, which he suffered, nor ever would have taken the trouble to recover them, if the Marquis de Llano and myself had not represented the affair at Paris.

I remember another trait of him, which is too characteristic to be omitted. The King of Poland requested of him an allegorical painting, and when the commission was given him by his minister, then resident in Rome, Menges replied, that with the greatest pleasure he would grant the request which his Majesty had honored him with, but having already various commissions from other sovereigns, reason dictated that he should accomplish those first, according to the orders which he had received; and besides, that he had given his word to some friends, to finish them some paintings, and those ought to be the first, because he preferred friendship to all the honors and dignities of this world.

He was a most faithful husband, and tender father to his children, to whom he gave a rigid and excellent education. Nevertheless he has much injured his family by his want of economy, and carelessness of money. One might reckon that in his last eighteen years he received more than one hundred and eighty thousand Scudi, and scarce left enough at his death to pay the expences of his funeral.

Many times have I spoken to him of the situ-

ation of his family, and proposed to him to apply one of his sons to painting. He replied always in the negative, saying, IF MY SON SHOULD BE FOUND INFERIOR TO ME, IT WOULD MUCH DISPLEASE ME, AND MUCH MORE WOULD IT VEX ME SHOULD HE BE FOUND MY SUPERIOR. This is an enthusiasm to be found alone in great men; and in fact, what can be expected from a man who does not esteem himself? Zeuxis made presents of his paintings because he thought them invaluable; Parrasius, arrogated to himself the surname of ABRODIAITOS, and many other genius's of the first rank have been still more self confident than Mengs, and believed justly SUMERE SUPERBIAM QUÆSITAM MERITIS. Almost every sovereign in Europe has desired some work of Mengs. The Czarina gave him a commission for two paintings, leaving to himself both the subjects, and the price, and advanced him two thousand scudi on account; but fate did not permit him even to begin the undertaking. It is worthy to be known however, as soon as the great Catharine found by the Cardinal de Bernis, the state in which this worthy man had left his family, she made them a present of the sum which she had advanced. The sum does not merit a remembrance, when speaking of an Empress who has astonished all Europe by her government, legislation, her triumphs, and generosity; therefore her annals will not find place for such an instance of humanity, not to confound the many others which offer in her reign.

The King of Naples wishing to introduce the taste of painting into that Capital, thought of founding an Academy of the Arts, and to put it under the direction of Menges; he therefore requested of the King, his father, to permit him to come to Naples to undertake that charge. His Majesty consented, and continued him his pension in addition to that which his Sicilian Majesty had granted him for this new commission. The news of this honourable employment, which would have given infinite satisfaction to Menges, arrived at Rome eight days after that of his death; by which he was deprived of receiving this consolation; and Naples has therefore lost the profit it would have reaped from his instruction.

The Amphitions decreed that Polignotus should be maintained at the public expence in any part of Greece, for having painted the Pecile of Athens. Charles 3d bestowed his bounty on Menges whilst he lived, and after his death has given dowers to his five daughters, and pensions to his two sons sufficient to live comfortably.

I have not yet mentioned the writings of Menges, from which he will derive as much merit as he has obtained by his pencil; I shall give an account of them as I publish them. I shall only here observe, that the confusion of his papers is such, as not to permit me to regulate them with that solicitude which they require; and to this fatigue is likewise added another, which is to be able to reduce the whole of his writings to one language, since he wrote all his compositions

promiscuously in the German, Italian, French, and Spanish Languages.

The decline of the Arts ought not to be attributed so much to the Artists, as to the Amateurs, and wealthy people, who order their works. The ignorance and barbarity of the latter, constrain the former, when they are employed, to give way to their ideas, if they are of ability; but often the Artist is impressed by a sympathy of folly the most shocking and intriguing.

These gentlemen do not consider the discredit which results to them from such conduct, nor the reproach which they purchase in perpetuity at their own expence; for no one will look at a foolish work, which is executed against the rules of reason, without calling him ignorant and barbarous who has designed it. If those who order, and pretend to judge of productions of the Arts, were really well informed, intelligent would likewise be the professors. It is well known that among the Greeks, those were philosophers who gave orders, as well as those who executed their designs; for that reason it has been said, a book is wanting which teaches to see things; I believe that the writings of Mengs will serve for this effect; and this will not be the least of the services which that great man has rendered the Arts.

The Works of Menges have produced a swarm of Critics of every kind; and to know from whence has arrived this delirium, some passages are quoted from Cumberland, an Englishman, who at the beginning of the war was in Spain, and remained there some years, fruitlessly managing some political negociation. Returning to his country, he thought of succeeding better by publishing his ANECDOTES OF EMINENT PAINTERS IN SPAIN DURING THE 16th AND 17th CENTURIES, WITH CURSORY REMARKS UPON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE ARTS IN THAT KINGDOM. Vol. II. in 12°. London. 1782.

Mr. Cumberland declares having undertaken this work to make known in England the most distinguished Spanish painters, and the greatest number of their paintings, as also those of the other most celebrated foreign painters, who in great numbers are dispersed in different parts of Spain, and who are besides little known, especially to the English. But however, in order not to go over the same track already made public by others, and not having sufficient knowledge of painting, as he many times ingeniously confessed, he thought to do great things by publishing a collection of anecdotes, or of tiresome trifles, which give not the least instruction of the Art, not even to the simple Amateurs; because he does not deign to characterize any of those painters, nor to describe any of their works, having

declared, that descriptions of paintings are as useless as those of battles.

He is pleased nevertheless to give a description of the SPASIMO DI SICILIA by Raphael as treated of by Mengs, and to that intent manifests his taste and knowledge, saying, " With respect to
" general effect, it always appeared to me, that
" there was a want of harmony in the composition; the carnations are all remarkably
" brown and ruddy (in this manner) nor are the
" figures and objects in the back ground kept
" down and softened as they are seen in nature:
" These defects in part may well be owing to
" unskilful retouches and bad modes of cleaning
" and varnishing; one remarkable circumstance
" is that of a leg amongst the group without an
" owner; a redundancy which the author could
" never be guilty of, and a collateral proof of
" the bad hands through which it has passed." And if in that painting (which is one of the most beautiful and best preserved of Raphael) are to be found retouches and defects, tell me where they are not to be found?

After having given the anecdotes of the Spanish painters of the 16th and 17th Century, this enlightened Author says, that in the present Age, Spain no longer produces Artists of that eminence, and he further observes that this decline is not peculiar to Spain, but is notorious in Flanders, France, and still much greater in Italy.
" The princes of the House of Bourbon, who
" have reigned in Spain, cannot be charged with
" having starved the cause, if expence be the
" measure of encouragement: The warmest

“ admirers of Mengs will not venture to say that
“ his talents were not duly considered and re-
“ warded by the present Sovereign, in whose
“ pay and employ he died. The reputation of
“ this Artist stood high in Europe, perhaps the
“ highest, but he found no solid encouragement
“ until he went into Spain; in Germany he
“ painted miniatures, and for England he paint-
“ ed copies; he was a fugitive from Dresden
“ and a beggar in Rome; in the Court of the Ca-
“ tholic King he found honour and emolument,
“ and exercised his Art in as respectable a stile
“ as Titian did under Charles 5th, Coello un-
“ der Philip the 2d, or Velazquez in the favour
“ of Philip the 4th. Certain it is, that under
“ these Princes, Spain produced many eminent
“ Painters, and was resorted to by the most dis-
“ tinguished foreign masters.”

Here Mr. Cumberland investigates the cause of this decline of the Arts; he wanders over wilds and countries, and at last believes he has found it in Spain to be, from the excessive vanity and proud independance of the people of Aragon, and the high dignity of the Castilians; and the Churches and Convents being saturated with virtue, the good brethren after having feasted well now sleep, and think no more of the Artists or the Arts; and Spain no longer choosing its ministers from the body of the nobility, for this reason they have fallen into obscurity, torpidity, and oblivion.

Upon no Artist has Cumberland been so diffuse as upon Mengs. He says that, “ Many people
“ of great reputed judgment have regarded

“ Mengs as the one bright luminary of modern times: In Spain, a man would pay his court very ill who did not applaud him, and some of his enthusiastic admirers join his Editor Azara in comparing him to Raphael and Correggio.”

Then he gives an abridgment of the life of Mengs, extracted from that published by the aforesaid Azara. Here, Mengs is no longer a fugitive from Saxony, or beggar at Rome, but soon becomes something more, because Mr. Cumberland, after having advanced much beautiful theory upon the judgment which is to be pronounced on Painters, dead and living, *DE VIVIS NIL NISI BONUM, DE MORTUIS NIL NISI VERUM*, says, that Mengs although idolater of Raphael, and more studious of him than Mr. Pascal of the Bible, finds him notwithstanding inferior to the Ancient Grecians for that ideal beauty which he certainly wanted, and that therefore Mengs founded his opinion upon hypothesis, and not upon proof of facts. From this we may derive that Mr. Cumberland has read, and well understood the works of Mengs.

He goes on further, and says: “ Mengs loved the truth, but he did not always find it out; under all the disadvantages of a contracted education, and soured by the severity of his father’s discipline, his habit became saturnine and morose, and his manners unsocial and inelegant; and he spoke with contempt of Artists superior to himself.”

We shall here-behold an enlightened proof.

Menges says; " That the book of the English Reynolds, would lead youth into error, because it abandons them to superficial principles the only known to that author." This is a crime for which Cumberland cannot find pardon for Menges, and Menges is therefore condemned. He says, " If the genius of Menges had been capable of producing a composition equal to that of the tragic and pathetic Ugolino, I am persuaded such a sentence as the above would never have passed his lips, but flattery made him vain, and sickness rendered him peevish; he found himself at Madrid, in a country without rivals, and because the Arts had travelled out of his sight he was disposed to think they existed no where but on his own palette. The time perhaps is at hand when our virtuosi (that is the English) will extend their route to Spain, and of these some one will probably be found, who regarding with just indignation these dogmatical decrees of Menges will take in hand the examination of his paintings, which I have now enumerated; and we may then be told with the authority of science, that his NATIVITY though so splendidly encased, and covered with such care that the VERY WINDS OF HEAVEN are not permitted to VISIT THE FACE TOO ROUGHLY, would have owed more to the chrystal than it does, in some parts at least, had it been less transparent than it is; that it discovers an abortive and puerile BAMBINO, which seems copied from a bottle; that Menges was an Artist who

“ had seen much, and invented little; that he
“ dispenses neither life nor death to his figures;
“ excites no terror, rouses no passions, and risks
“ no flights; that by studying to avoid particu-
“ lar defects, he incurs general ones, and paints
“ with tameness and fervility; that the con-
“ tracted scale and idea of a painter of minia-
“ tures, as which he was brought up, is to be
“ traced in all, or most of his compositions, in
“ which a finished delicacy of pencil exhibits
“ the HAND of the Artist, but gives no emana-
“ tions of the SOUL of the Master; if it is beauty
“ it does not warm; if it is sorrow it excites no
“ pity: That, when the Angel announces the
“ salutation to Mary, it is a Messenger that has
“ neither used dispatch in the errand, nor grace
“ in the delivery; that although RUBENS was by
“ one of his oracular sayings condemned to the
“ ignominious dullness of a Dutch translator,
“ MENGES was as capable of painting RUBENS’s
“ Adoration as he was of creating the Star in
“ the East that ushered the Magi: but these
“ are questions above my capacity; I resign
“ MENGES to abler critics, and REYNOLDS to
“ better defenders; well contented that poste-
“ rity should admire them both, and well assured
“ that the fame of our countryman is establish-
“ ed beyond the reach of envy and detraction.”

Nor is yet the elegant Cumberland satisfied by
this civilized truth, pronounced with such mo-
desty; for he says, Rubens’ painting of the death
of Christ, in the hall of the Chapel of the Escu-
rial, is most striking and expressive; and that he

had never seen a painting which spoke so strongly to the passions as that does. "That though
"amongst other capital performances one stops
"and feels that RUBENS has touched the passions with something more than a painter's,
"with a poet's hand. Contemplating this picture, I could not help calling to mind the
"bitterness of MENGES' criticism when he is
"comparing RUBENS' copy of TITIAN to a
"Dutch translation of an elegant author; and
"in this train of thinking I could not avoid
"drawing a comparison in my mind between
"the piece before me, and that which MENGES
"himself has composed on the like subject.
"The scene is the same, the actors the same,
"and the catastrophe not to be diversified: But
"with MENGES all is lifeless, cold and flat; methodized by art and measured by rule; the
"group of an Academy, fitters for attitudes,
"and hirelings for sorrow; the dead body of
"the Christ is laid out, and in like manner exposed to view in the one case as in the other,
"but what a contrast! MENGES has indeed laboured hard to make a beautiful corpse; he
"has rounded the muscles and polished the skin,
"and given it such a hue that it ceases to be
"flesh and is a shining waxen figure with no
"trace of pain or sufferings past; look upon the
"other and you contemplate, as it should seem
"the very person, WHO HIMSELF BORE OUR
"SORROWS ON THE TREE BY WHOSE STRIPES
"WE ARE HEALED. Yet MENGES is the Author whom courtly prejudice has put above

“ comparison in Spain, whom not to admire is treason against state, and whose worship is become canonical, a part almost of the orthodox idolatry of their religion: Mengs is the critic who, professedly treating of the collection of pictures in the palace at Madrid, can afford no commendation or description of RUBENS’ capital picture of the ADORATION, and records his name apparently with no other view but to make a needless sacrifice of it to that of TRITIAN, whom it seems he had had the temerity to copy.”

Mr. Cumberland terminates his great pictorial work in a political acumen. After having lamented the misfortunes of Spain, under the Carthaginians, Romans, Barbarians, Moors, and the unhappy discovery of the new hemisphere, he finds it yet “ respectable in its misfortunes, and “ formidable though in decay, but the last “ hand that was put to her ruin held the pen “ which signed away her reputation and independence in the family compact; generous, “ unsuspecting, and impolitic, she has bound “ herself to an ally, whose union like the action “ of certain chemical mixtures, will dissolve “ every noble particle in her composition and “ leave her spiritless and vapid. France and “ Spain of recent equality and emulation, can “ never find reciprocal advantages in political “ alliance, the interests of the weaker party “ must of necessity become a sacrifice to those “ of the stronger and more artful, and with which “ of the two that superiority actually lies, and

"those advantages are likely to remain, is a
 "point too clear to admit of a doubt, or need
 "an explanation."

He who can find in Raphael such deformity
 must certainly find horrible all the world.

LIST OF PAINTINGS

DONE IN SPAIN BY

ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES,

FOR THE ROYAL FAMILY AS WELL AS PRIVATE PERSONS.

In the Royal Palace is the ceiling of the Anti-chamber of the King painted in fresco representing the Council of the Gods, with the Apotheosis of Hercules.

After the same manner is done Aurora in another chamber, by that reason called the Chamber of Aurora, and at the four façades are done the four seasons of the year with various ornaments in the freize consisting of infants, vases, and foliage.

He painted the grand ceiling of the Hall where the King dines, where is represented the Apotheosis of Trajan, and the Temple of Glory.

In the private Oratory of his Majesty, the Nativity of Christ, in fresco: the painting in oil

which was there before has been taken away on account of not being in a good light.

Likewise in oil, in the bed chamber of the King, is the famous Descent from the Cross, a piece of more than twelve geometrical feet in height, and wide in proportion in figures as large as nature. In the superior part there is likewise another painting on wood, representing the Father Eternal, with the Holy Ghost and various Angels.

In the same chamber over the doors are four subjects upon the Passion; that is, the Prayer in the Garden, the Flagellation, the Crucifixion, and the Apparition to Mary Magdalen after the Resurrection.

In the same apartments are two other small paintings, one of the young Saint John (which he did in Spain) and another as companion of Mary Magdalen, which he sent from Rome; they are a foot and a half in height, and one in breadth.

Another painting is of the Conception, less than three feet high, and two feet in breadth; and another of Saint Anthony of Padua, nearly of equal size, which his Majesty always took with him when he travelled.

In the Gallery which leads to the Chamber of his Majesty, is the Madonna and Child, Saint Joseph, and Saint John, the height of six feet, and four in breadth; being the first painting which Mengs painted in oil at Madrid.

The Nativity of Christ in oil colours, taken as it is said from the Oratorio, is removed to the

chamber of the Prince of Asturias; the height is of near eleven feet, and six in breadth.

Another painting of the same subject on wood, brought from Rome is in his Majesty's chamber nine feet in height, and seven in breadth.

The estimation which the King bears for this painting, will be conceived by his having placed before it a crystal of equal size. This custom of placing crystals before paintings has notwithstanding its inconvenience; because they cannot receive a light so as to view well at once the entire; from whence it is necessary that the spectator moves his situation in order to examine the painting by parts. The dark colours reflect the light, and produce the effect of a mirror. The Arts have not yet been able to make the two superficies of a crystal equally parallel and the larger it is the more encreases the difficulty. A deviation in the surface, however imperceptible it may be, alters the reflection of light, and of course the figures of the piece. If the paste of the crystal has any colours, which happens to those made of Kali or Barilla, the which having a green ground, all the tints of the painting reflect a certain stain of this colour. The air which is shut up between the crystal and the painting, being confined, alters and damages the colours, and hastens the ruin of the picture.

A painting of Christ Crucified as large as nature, five feet high and four in breadth, is placed in the bed chamber of his Majesty at Aranjuez.

In the same place are two portraits of the King and Queen of Naples, in half figures, of

near five feet high, and of breadth in proportion.

Of the same size in other apartments of that Palace, are two others, one of the same Queen of Naples, and the other of the Arch Dutchess, her sister.

Likewise are there placed the portraits of the great Dukes of Tuscany, with four others of that Royal Family, done at Florence, the first are four feet and a half high, and wide in proportion; the others, five in length.

In the same Palace of Aranjuez in the ceiling of the Theatre he painted a picture in distemper, of Time ravishing Pleasure, which was very much admired as a lively allegory, worthy of his sublime and fruitful genius.

He likewise drew his Majesty and all the Royal Family many times; and a second time the Prince of Asturias; and likewise did two Portraits of the Infanta Donna Carlotta Gioacchina.

The four parts of the day, as sopraportes, are in the Chamber of the Princess, nine feet in height.

For the most Serene Prince of Asturias he did one painting on wood of the Madonna and Child, and Saint Joseph.

Another painting which represented a Youth who pretends to pursue honour, and despises interest, is placed in the house of his Highness at the Escorial.

At San Ildefonso is a painting of the Holy Mary Magdalen, in more than half figure, placed in the chamber of Dispatches.

For the Infant Don Lewis he did a piece of the Madonna and Child, and Saint Joseph, four feet in length, and three in breadth.

A portrait of his Highness larger than half figure is not finished.

He painted Saint Pasqual Baylon for the High Altar of the Church of the Royal Convent of that name at Aranjuez.

The most Serene Infant Don Gabriel has likewise a piece of the Prayer in the Garden, which is not finished.

PAINTINGS FOR PRIVATE PERSONS.

The principal painting at Saint Isidore, represents the Holy Trinity, with the Madonna, Saint Damascus, and other Spanish Saints, which he did in figures much larger than nature, of the height of seventeen feet, and twelve in breadth.

For the King of Denmark, he did the Portrait of his Majesty of Spain, full size, armed, on foot, under a magnificent canopy; with all the ornaments, and attributes expressive of his Spanish Majesty, of the height of twelve feet, and nine in width: It was exhibited in public at Madrid on a feast day.

Another painting is the Assumption, with the Father Eternal, and a great accompaniement of Angels; figures as large as nature, twelve feet high and seven in breadth.

Another of Saint John the Baptist preaching,

is six feet high, and less than five in breadth, both for the Count of Rivadavia. Mengs finished this painting in a particular style never used by him before. The situation in which it was to be placed has a sky light which strikes upon the eyes of the spectators; for this reason, he forced nature a little, made great masses, and marked the parts with great force. It appears a painting after the style of Michael Angelo, when he is not overcharged, or of Raphael when he wishes to combat with that of the Conflagration of Borgo.

He did the Portrait of the Duke of Alva in half figure.

And two more of the Dutchess of Huescar, now the Dutchess of Arcos.

Another for the Dutchess of Medina Coeli, seated on a chair.

Another of a figure entire in a masque habit, for the Marchioness of Llano.

And for the same Lady another of half figure.

He painted likewise the Portrait of Don Peter Campomanes, larger than half figure.

Another of Don Philip de Castro, of half figure, but of that the head only is finished.

He did a Madonna in grief, for Don Antonio de la Quadra, Director General of the Posts.

A Saint Peter seated, of natural size, he gave to his barber, Peter Martinez.

He finished likewise in the Palace a large painting of the Ascension of our Lord, begun at Rome by commission from the Court of Dresden.

He did many Portraits of himself little less than half figure, which he gave to his friends, and among others to Don Bernardo de Yriarte.

He left imperfect the Portrait of Don Americus Pini, Adjutant of the King's chamber, but it wanted something of being finished. He likewise began one of the Marquis de Llano, his friend and mine.

These were sent to Rome to be finished, as well as other works which are not mentioned here, having remained very imperfect.

ANTHONY DE BERNARDO
...the many portraits of himself which he
...ball figure which he gave to the
and among others to Don Bernar...
...the left hand of the portrait of Don Bernar...
...the right hand of the king's portrait, but
it wanted something of being in the
...began one of the M...
...and mine.
...were sent to Rome to be finished.
...as well as other works which are not mentioned
here having remained.

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REFLECTIONS

UPON BEAUTY AND TASTE IN PAINTING,

By *ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES.*

THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.

THIS Treatise, in the beginning, was written principally for my own use, and with the desire only of retracing in it some useful truths. When it was almost finished I was desired by an Academy in Germany to give it to them, which, however, was impeded by various accidents. This Academy was however dissolved, and my Treatise remained with me. Some time after, when I casually perused it, I was not content with the whole, and purposed to write it anew, leaving out some things, and adding many others; but, considering what time and fatigue it required, and knowing myself incapable of ornamenting my sentiments and ideas with a

beautiful style, I resolved to relinquish and abandon the whole. ~~On perusing it again, it~~ appeared to me, that for the truths which it contained, it ought not to remain in oblivion, and that these truths might be useful to many; from ~~which reflections, and by persuasion of~~ my friend Winkelman, to whom I have dedicated it, I was induced, at last, to prepare it for publication. I should not wish, otherwise, to give it my name, because I am no author by profession; ~~nor do I wish to expose myself to~~ the criticism of those, who, perhaps, will not understand me.

I entreat the Students of Painting, who read this Treatise, to read it with the greatest attention, and to be persuaded that they will find, by the reasonings, and the tracks therein indicated, that I am arrived in the Art of Painting to a higher degree than many of my contemporaries; and to be assured, likewise, that the work which I now offer them is the gift of my heart. If they reflect well upon what I advance, and to such reflections unite unwearied diligence, and uninterrupted application, I can assert that they will receive advantages of no inferior nature.

My intention has been, first, to explain what is beauty, since men are of such various opinions upon this subject. Secondly, to explain what is Taste, as the major part of those who have written on the same do not give a clear information how the word taste is used in speaking of Painting. Finally, I have

endeavoured to render more intelligible what is Taste, by means of examples, which the first Professors have given upon the same; in the mean time, being the first part rather unconnected with Painting, I feared having rendered the work useless to those for whom it was my intention to write; namely, Painters, for which reason I have since sought to adduce such examples as furnish me with motives to speak of all the rules of the art.

It is necessary to know that all those parts which I exalt and praise of illustrious painters, ought to be held as so many rules and examples of imitation.

The students of painting will remember not to lose too much time in the subtilties which are herein written, since in the beginning they will not be of any service. The first care of a beginner ought to be to accustom the eye to exactness and precision, so as by that to become capable of imitating any thing. At the same time, he ought to apply the hand to exercise and quickness, in a manner, that it should become obedient to perform all that which he desires, and then is the time to begin the rules and study the scientific part of the art. I therefore prefer practice and execution to theory and scientific rules, because the latter can be learnt in an advanced state, but for the exercise and the use of a just eye, it is indispensable to attain a certain age; that is to say, when one has not acquired any depraved custom; since, he who once has taken a bad habit, in a

more advanced age will be incapable of receiving a good one.

It is necessary, therefore, that this Treatise be read by various classes of Painters, and also with various reflections.

The beginner ought to read it only to comprehend what is vast and difficult in the art, to the end that he may hasten and not lose time in learning the inferior parts of it ; in the mean time, notwithstanding such parts are the materials and fundaments of the art, they are but of little use until they are adjoined to all the other parts of the grand edifice.

The second class of Painters, that is to say, those who are already in full possession of the first principles, are for whom this book is chiefly written, in order that they may learn what is Taste, and examine if they themselves possess it from Nature or not, or by what means or examples they can acquire it.

The professional painter may likewise find something useful in this Treatise, as much in distinguishing the true beauties of the great masters, as to guide youth properly in the study of that art.

I speak freely, because I know in this world we have no other certain means to prove the value of a thing, than the experience of its utility. Of this experience I am myself an example, since all which I know I have learnt by the way and manner of thinking described in this Treatise.

If some parts of this work should be found

difficult to be understood, I am always ready to give further explanations, and if it happens that I have been deceived in any thing, I shall not suffer myself so much to be seduced by a vain ambition, as not to confess the error in which I have fallen, and shall defend myself with the most clear proofs every time I do not think myself erroneous.

difficult to be understood, I am always ready to
give further explanations, and if it happens
that I have been deceived in any thing, I shall
not suffer myself to attach to the subject any
vain ambition, as not to confess the error in
which I have been, and shall defend myself
with the most cool heads and tone, I do not
think myself concerned.

PART THE FIRST.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

EXPLANATION OF BEAUTY.

SINCE perfection is not allotted to mankind, and is only to be found in God, and as nothing is comprehensible to our nature except that which falls under the conviction of the senses; thus the Omnipotent has thought fit to imprint a visible IDEA of that perfection, which is what we call BEAUTY.

This Beauty is found in all things, whenever our ideas and intellectual senses cannot carry the imagination beyond the perfection which we behold in the thing created.

This, therefore, resembles the nature of a point. A point ought to be indivisible, from whence it is always, properly speaking, incomprehensible; but since it is of advantage to form a visible idea, therefore, that mark which is considered mathematically indivisible, is called

a visible point. We ought, therefore, to figure to ourselves, that perfection is as a mathematical or indivisible point, containing in itself all the properties of the Celestial attributes which are not to be found in matter, because all matter is imperfect, therefore we have imagined a kind of perfection adapted to the human comprehension; that is, when our senses are not capable of discovering what are the imperfections of a thing, then this appearance of perfection is called BEAUTY. This (as has already been said) is found in every thing, and in all things together, and is the perfection of matter; and between that and Divine perfection subsists the same difference as between the two points, therefore one might call Beauty, visible perfection, the same as we call a point, visible. And since in the visible point is always the invisible; thus in Beauty there is always perfection, although invisible. The eye does not see any of that indivisible perfection, but the soul feels and comprehends it, since the soul, as well as perfection has been derived from God, the fountain and source of every perfect thing.

Plato * calls the emotions which beauty produces upon the soul, a remembrance of supreme perfection, and believes that to be the cause of its enchanting power. Perhaps I might dream with the same success, if I said that the soul is stricken with beauty because they are derived

* Plato in Phædro, 111, p. 249.

from the same origin ; that is to say, transported in a momentary beatitude, which it hopes and expects to have received from God to all eternity, but which is soon lost in all matter.

CHAP. II.

THE CAUSE OF BEAUTY IN THINGS VISIBLE.

NOTHING is visible without matter, the which ought to have a form, and that form is the measure of its force or power ; that power has been given it by the Creator, and is the cause of its form. In the first form of Nature one does not behold Beauty, because it is not yet unfolded to the sight, and although it be discoverable, it is not therefore comprehensible. From this first form, Reason has composed others, which are already visible, and that first visibility is shown by colours. These colours are different, according to the diversity of their aspect ; that is, according as the rays of light produce different effects upon the superface. When these first subtilties, visible aspects, and forms, are simple and uniform, they are called pure, because light causes only one effect in them, and that effect produces Beauty. To prove that

is thus, that is, that colours arise, or are produced from the aspect of uniform matter, is seen by means of a prism; and that uniformity produces beauty, is evident, because the most beautiful red destroys the best yellow, and blue destroys red; then mixing all the three, red, yellow, and blue, together, the whole are destroyed. If we see that Nature has given colours so opposite to matter, it arises from a diversity in its little forms or particles, and by the mixture of the same. From these little forms Nature has composed others greater, of which we cannot judge as being beautiful or ugly according to their colours, but according to their aspect; and also in this it is uniformity which is the basis of its beauty. For this reason, the circular form is the most perfect of all; because it contains but one motive, which is the extension of its proper centre; and those which have different motives are always inferior in perfection; but, nevertheless, they have also their beauty, because those parts which are not uniform, are therefore adapted to different significations, as one sees clearly in Nature, where many things deprived of beauty, become beautiful by the correspondence which one part has with another. All Nature is made to move, and to please; for that reason the parts active ought to be the same, nor less, than the parts passive; from whence it is necessary that there be likewise a diversity of beauty, since the parts passive should necessarily be less perfect than the parts active.

These imperfect parts however are not for this less estimable, and have also in their imperfections a kind of beauty natural to them, and which is manifested when they are disposed of according to their destiny. For this reason there is Beauty in all things, since nature has done nothing in vain; and, as is already said, there is Beauty in every thing which appears perfect in the idea and aspect to which it appertains. Idea comes from the cognition of the destination of a thing, and that cognition is derived from the soul. Beauty is likewise to be found in any thing, when its cause is conformable to its destiny. It is very natural therefore that there are parts more or less perfect or imperfect; since Nature is like a Republic, to which belong all its inhabitants and citizens, but all are not of an equal rank, and dignity; and thus it is also in nature; all the parts cannot be equally beautiful and perfect; and here it is necessary to reflect, that the parts most beautiful and perfect, are often less useful than those which are less perfect; because the first are susceptible of various operations, and can produce more than one effect; and the latter, to the contrary, are capable of one sole effect, and serve but one end only. This is confirmed in all colours, and in all aspects. The three perfect colours are certainly yellow, red, and blue; and there is one only idea of their perfection, which is, when they are found at an equal distance from any other colour. The colours less perfect are therefore composed, as are the rose, the green, the

violet, which can be of different qualities, according as they more or less approach the perfect colours; and the colours composed of these three, are susceptible of a variation almost infinite.

The less a colour is perfect the more it can be varied; and this variation does not finish, except when the composition no longer represents any principal idea distinguishable of colour; and then it becomes like a thing lifeless, and insignificant. The same happens in forms and aspects. The circular form only is truly perfect, and this, as well as the equilateral figures, cannot be so but in one manner only. But those of different sides are also susceptible of various significations, and adapted to different ideas; from whence they become as useful as the perfect figures. The reason of that is herein given, in speaking of colours; and since the imperfect colours are as useful as those which are perfect, because they are adapted to an almost infinite variation, so are likewise imperfect figures, because they are equally variable, and in the end rest deprived of signification, and fall again into obscurity. Any thing is considered beautiful, when it corresponds with the idea which we have of that same thing: this is evident in different things, which though entirely opposite to one another are praised as being beautiful. We call beautiful, for instance, a stone of one colour only, and beautiful likewise another, which is of more colours, and of a variety of marks and veins: If therefore one only kind of perfection were the cause of beauty, one of

these stones would have been said to be beautiful, and the other ugly; and therefore if the one and the other are called beautiful, it is because they agree with the idea which we have of the same; and for that reason the stone which we think ought to be uniform, and of one colour only, when it is found stained is called ugly; and the other stone which according to the accustomed idea ought to be stained, and of many colours, if it were found too uniform it would likewise be ugly, because the one and the other appear imperfect, in the idea which we have of them. The same happens in all things created. A child would be ugly if it had the face of a man of mature age: a man is ugly when he has the face of a woman; and a woman is certainly not beautiful with a beard, or with the features of a man.

These reflections are sufficient to show the principal cause of Beauty; from whence I conclude that beauty is derived from the uniformity of matter with the ideas; the ideas arise from the cognition of the destination of a thing; this cognition originates from experience, and speculation upon the general effects of things; the general effects arise from the destination which the Creator has thought fit to give these things; this destination has for foundation the graduate disposition of the perfections of nature; and finally, above all, the first cause is in the immensity of divine wisdom.

C H A P. III.

THE EFFECTS OF BEAUTY.

BEAUTY consists in the perfection of matter according to our ideas. Since God alone is perfect, Beauty is for that reason a thing divine. The more beautiful a thing is, the more it is animated. Beauty is the soul of matter. As the soul of man is the cause of his being, thus also is Beauty the soul of figures; and that which is not beautiful is like death in man. This Beauty has a power which delights and enchants; and being of a spirit, moves the soul of man, encreases, if we may so say, its strength, and makes it in some moments forget that it is confined within the narrow centre of the body. From this is derived the attractive power of Beauty. As soon as the eye beholds a beautiful object, the soul is awakened, and wishes to unite itself with it; man therefore seeks to approach, and accost it. Beauty transports the senses of man beyond what is human; all is changed and in commotion in him; so much so, that if this enthusiasm is of some duration he falls silently into a kind of sadness: then it is that the soul of man is no more than the mere appearance of perfection.

Nature has for that reason produced many

gradations of Beauty, in order to hold the human spirit, by the variety, in equal and continued commotion: Beauty attracts every one, because its power is uniform, and sympathetic with the soul of man. He who seeks it, finds it in every thing and every where, since it is the light of all matter, and the similitude of the same Divinity.

CHAPTER IV.

*IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO FIND PERFECTION
IN NATURE, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT FOUND
THERE.*

ALTHOUGH Beauty is never found in Nature in a degree truly perfect, one ought not therefore to believe, that properly it is not there to be found, and that to wish to imitate it one has to transgress the laws of truth. Nature has made all things in such a manner, that every thing may be perfect according to its destiny; but since perfection participates so much of Divinity, for that reason few things in Nature are found perfect, and many things imperfect. The perfect is that which one sees full of reason; and since each figure has only one centre, or middle point, thus has also all Nature, in every kind,

one only centre, in which is contained all the perfection of its circumference. The Centre is a sole point, and in the circumference of the figure it comprehends an infinity of points, which are all imperfect in comparison to that of the centre. As among stones, one only kind is perfect, which is the diamond, among all metals only gold, and among animated creatures here below is man alone; thus there is likewise a distinction in each species apart, and few are those which are truly perfect. Since man does not originate of himself, but depends first to see the light, and then to take his form from extraneous accidents, thus it is almost impossible that he should be perfectly beautiful. That man is scarce ever to be found who is not subject to passions, which, in a lesser or greater degree affect his being; nor is there to be found one who has not his predilectual, and predominant affections. The human body has all these affections, and passions, in different parts, on which they operate and influence particularly. The same happens in women, who, scarce gravid, are tormented and oppressed by their passions and affections, even to the injury of their health, and that of the infant which they bear; from whence the soul of the embryo is not at liberty to finish the formation of its body to perfection; for if it could operate without impediment, it would form the body certainly perfect, and in consequence beautiful.* This is the mo-

* From this, and from other propositions, one sees a mixture of Platonism and Leibnizianism, which Winkelman in his Metaphorical parts had insinuated to Mengs. The force of the soul

tive by which, from the beauty and body of a person one judges of his strength, and of the quality of his spirit, forming easily a good opinion of him who is beautiful and well made; but because the soul is thus impeded in the womb, we see but few persons born beautiful. What contributes besides to this is, the diversity of people, of climate, of passions, and of vices which predominate in different countries; and are the cause why entire nations are distinguishable by their aspect. To prove that we should otherwise find man a perfect Beauty is deducted from this, that almost every one has some parts of his body beautiful, and these parts are more conformable than the others to the utility and object of the whole structure. Man therefore would be beautiful, if the accidents which are natural to him did not spoil him. I speak of man in being the part of all Nature, in which, more than in any other appears true Beauty.

which forms the body without knowing how, and plastic Nature, which some have brought to light, are ideas which apparently ought not to have access in this age. Nevertheless we still find those who collect them, and this gave motive to the Historian of the Academy of Sciences at Paris to say in the Eulogy of M. Hartsoeker, "THAT NO IDEA OF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY IS SO PROSCRIBED THAT ONE MAY NOT HOPE FOR ITS BEING RENEWED IN THE MODERN."

C H A P. V.

ART CAN SURPASS NATURE IN BEAUTY.

THE Art of painting is said to be an imitation of Nature; from whence it appears, that in its perfection it ought to be inferior to it; but this subsists conditionally. There are things in Nature which Art cannot entirely imitate, and where the one appears feeble and weak in comparison to the other, as, for instance, in imitating light or darkness. To the contrary Art has one thing very important, in which it by far surpasses Nature, which is in Beauty. Nature, in its productions, is subject to a variety of accidents; Art therefore operates freely, since it avails itself of materials entirely flexible, and which nothing resists. The Art of Painting is, to choose of all the subjects of Nature, the most beautiful, gathering, and placing together the materials of different places, and the beauty of various persons; to the contrary, for instance, Nature, to form man, is constrained to take the material part of the mother only, subject to all its accidents; from whence it is visible that a portrait might be more beautiful than man in Nature. Whenever is there found united in one man, greatness of soul, harmony and proportion of the body; a virtuous mind, and members pliant and robust? And what man finds

himself in such a perfect state of health, as never to be agrieved by his occupations, employments, and pursuits? But in Painting, one can unite and express every good quality of him: it is sufficient to observe, and to express, exactness in the design, grandeur in the figure, ease in the posture, beauty in the members, force in the breast, agility in the legs, strength in the shoulders and arms, sincerity on the front and brow, prudence in the eyes, health on the cheek, and grace and loveliness on the lips; carrying itself thus throughout all the parts, from the greatest to the smallest, as much in the figure of man, as in that of woman, and by adapting these modifications according to the diversity of their aspects and expressions, one may see that Art can easily surpass Nature; for since no flower produces honey from every part, the Bee visits that only from which it can extract the richest sweets; thus can also the skilful painter gather from all the creation the best and most beautiful parts of nature, and produce by this Artifice the greatest expression and sweetness.

That by a good choice one may meliorate the things in Nature, becomes clear from the two charming and agreeable arts of Poetry and Music. The latter of which is not more than a collection of all the tones which are found in Nature, put in measure, and which from a good choice receives a motive, and acquires a spirit capable of moving the soul of man; and this spirit is called Harmony. Thus, therefore, Poetry is no more than the ordinary discourse of men; by

whom is put in measured order, first the sentiments, and then the words; and by a choice of the most sonorous and grateful of these and by means of a kind of harmony, is found the measure of the syllable. Then, since Music and Poetry have a force infinitely greater than that of tones and words mixed together without any order, thus, therefore, Painting, worthy sister of the same Arts, receives from the order in which it is placed, and from the good choice which refuses that which is superfluous, and insignificant, an additional force, or one might say its whole being.

It is advisable therefore that the adepts of this Art should never think the most sublime degree is already occupied, and that it cannot be exalted higher. Such an idea, as well as it is false, is likewise prejudicial to them. None of the moderns have followed the road of perfection like the ancient Grecians; for the whole, since the art has been almost revived anew, have only had in view Truth and the way of pleasing; and if besides any one had carried to the highest perfection those parts of the Art which they professed, nevertheless, for those who seek perfection, there would remain to unite the particular perfections of the one with those of the other, making a perfect whole. No one ought therefore to be intimidated from beholding others great, celebrated, and perfect; on the contrary, their own greatness and fame, ought to serve them as a stimulus to combat with them, and dispute the post which they occupy; and if also they remain inferior, it will, notwithstanding, be a glory to have been

excelled by those whom they have only imitated. Whoever seeks greatness, will always appear great, although in trifles; and as a traveller who accomplishes the half of his journey judges, if he continues he will arrive at the end, so one should judge that a virtuoso, once on the road to perfection, proceeding with constancy may secure in time the point he has attempted. I can besides affirm, as I have already said, that none of the modern Painters, whose works I have seen, have sought to attain the highest perfection, nor do I believe that the Art will be ever more caried to that sublime degree of beauty and perfection in which it was found among the ancient Greeks, except by chance should arise in Italy another Athens.

This is what I have wished to say of Beauty, which is therefore the formed and visible perfection of Matter; because absolute perfection is a spirit invisible. The perfection of Matter consists in its conformity with our ideas, the which likewise consist in the cognition of its destiny. A thing is perfect when it expresses an idea conformable to itself. Perfections are distributed in Nature like so many offices. That thing which is most capable, and best adapted to fill its office, is in its kind the most perfect; for this reason also, that which is ugly sometimes becomes beautiful on account of the character it represents. That thing which has only one motive conformable to its being, is of a higher rank of Beauty than that which has more spirit, and is more sublime than that which has more matter. The spiritual

has the power to administer its perfection to the material, which can receive it. It is therefore necessary that the virtuoso who would wish to produce any thing beautiful, should propose to rise gradually from matter; to attempt nothing without reason, nothing superfluous, and nothing which is lifeless, or without expression, since that destroys every thing in which it enters: his genius ought to seek to give perfection to matter, by means of a good choice. Genius is the Reason of Painters: this Reason ought to have an empire over Matter, and its principal diligence ought to be to determine the motives of things, and to follow in an entire work one principal motive, so that it may appear one motive only, the which should be distributed even in the smallest parts of matter. It is then necessary that he chooses the best adapted parts of Nature, to render clear and intelligible his idea to those who view it. As Nature has distributed her perfections in different degrees, thus ought likewise the painter in giving different things their significations, apply different expressions; but all should be directed towards the principle signification; then the spectator distinguishes in each the idea, and in the whole together the motive of the work, which he will praise as perfect, when the quality of the materials of each part is conformable to his ideas; then it is that his affection will be moved by the beauty which appears in all its parts; because each part, having its motive and spirit, all the work will be full of it, and for that reason will please, and will have the highest degree of perfection.

As the Creator of Nature has given a perfection to every thing, and has made all Nature to appear beautiful, admirable, and worthy of him; thus ought also the painter to apply, and leave in each expression, and from each little stroke of the pencil, a counterfign of his genius and wisdom, to the end that his work may be ever esteemed as worthy of a rational being.

PART THE SECOND.

OF TASTE.

CHAP. I.

*THE ORIGIN OF THAT NAME AS APPLIED
TO THE ARTS.*

ALL human works are imperfect, and if any are esteemed as perfect, it is because we do not know their defects. Human perfection is but a similitude or a shadow of true perfection, and for that reason, the word Taste is used in painting, to signify that a work can have the taste of perfection without being truly perfect. This taste in painting, is in part like that of the palate, because the one touches the mouth, and tongue, and the other moves the eye and the intellect. In both, Taste has many gradations, which are all comprehended under the same denomination; and since many things are of a sweet, bitter, or four taste,

without the bitter, sour, and sweet being of equal strength, thus, is also in painting, the great, the delicate, and the forcible, and each of these in different and distinct degrees.

CH A P. II.

EXPLANATION OF TASTE.

ALL that which does not touch or move man, cannot please him; and no food is agreeable unless it has some distinguishable flavour. In the same manner in painting it is likewise necessary, that every thing which the eye beholds should touch and effect the nerves in order to be pleasing.

Taste is variable in every one, as much as style and manners, with this only difference, that it is found, in general, either good or bad, and is judged according as it is; so that Taste might be praise-worthy when it is no ways perfect; and since we call many things sweet or sour, which savour very little of that flavour, thus, also, a painting might be of good taste, although it partakes very little of perfection. The Taste of painting can also be of good or bad habitude, as well as that of the flavour, since

the eye becomes habituated as well as the palate. Strong food, and liquors, destroy the taste, but that which is light preserves the most delicate flavor. Thus it is likewise in painting: those pieces which are forced or overcharged, destroy the taste of the art, but the simply beautiful works accustom the eye to a more delicate sense. The taste of those who like heavy and gaudy pieces, arises from a low and vulgar mind; whereas, those who like only the cool and tender subjects, have, in general, a taste very refined; and this diversity is not only found in the amateurs, but in the professors of the art.

C H A P. III.

DETERMINATIONS, AND RULES FOR TASTE.

THE best Taste which Nature can give, is that of the Medium, since it pleases mankind in general. Taste is that which determines painters in their choice, and from that choice we judge and know if their taste be good or bad. Good, and the best, is that taste which is between the two extremes, and each extreme is bad.

The Paintings which are commonly praised, and esteemed of good taste, are those in which one sees well expressed the principal objects, with a certain ease, which hides all labour and art. Both these styles are pleasing, and give great credit to the author, whom one believes to have had great judgment in choosing so well the principal things, and must have had great talents to have performed his work with such facility.

The grandeur of Taste consists in the choice of parts superior to the common, as well in Man as in Nature, and by hiding subordinate and trivial parts, which are not absolutely necessary.

Meanness in Taste, is that which expresses the great and the inferior in the same manner; from whence the whole becomes within the medium, and almost without Taste *.

Beautiful Taste is, finally, that which expresses the most beautiful parts of Nature. This, therefore, is superior to mediocrity, and is sublime in comparison to that which expresses but the inferior and ugly parts of Nature. In the same manner are the pleasing and significant Tastes, with many others that one might mention.

Taste is that which, in painting, produces and determines a principal scope, and causes one to choose or reject that which is conformable to, or contrary to the same. From whence it is that when we see a work in which the whole is

* Meanness of Taste expresses distinctly all little things; and therefore the whole becomes little.

expressed without distinction and variety, we pronounce the author to have been void of Taste; because he has not distinguished himself by any thing particular; and such works remain, if we may so say, without any expression. The works of every painter succeed according to the choice he makes, in which is to be understood, the colouring, clare obscure, drapery, and every other thing relative to painting. If he chooses the parts most beautiful and grand, he will produce works of the best taste. All that is beautiful which discovers the good quality of a thing, and the reverse is that which shows only the bad parts. Painters, therefore, consider the necessary perfection of any thing which they behold, and make choice of those things which best agree with their desires, since these must be beautiful. On the other hand, they reject that which they would wish to be otherwise than it is, since such must be void of Beauty.

From the consideration of the quality of a thing arises the expression; as every thing has expression according to its quality. Generally such is good as is beneficial and pleasing to our senses, and the reverse is that which offends the eye and the intellect, and shows itself contrary to the same. All that which is not conformable to its cause and its destination, is such as is contrary to its office, or of whose existence one cannot comprehend the motive, and one knows not why this, or that form has offended the intellect. Also, that is offensive to the eye which

distends too much its nerves and the lesser parts ; from whence it proceeds, that some colours, as well as the clare obscure, when they are too much raised and too vivid, tire and fatigue, and the livid and too bright colours are disgusting, because they transport the eye with too great celerity from one sentiment to the other, and produce by that an effort, and a precipitate extension of the nerves which gives pain to the eye. And from the same motive is harmony so pleasing, since it always discovers things in the medium. It is necessary besides to reflect, that from painting being composed of such diversity, there never has been a professor, who has had a Taste equally good in all its parts; but often in one part he has known how to choose well enough, and in another very indifferently; and in some without either skill or knowledge. This precision forms the distinction of Taste among the most celebrated professors, as I shall further explain.

CHAP. IV.

HOW TASTE AGREES WITH IMITATION.

IMITATION is the first part of Painting, and of course the most necessary, although not the

most beautiful. That which is necessary is never the most ornamented, nor the most elegant; because necessity shows poverty, and ornaments are signs of abundance; and since painting, generally speaking, is sought after more for ornament than for necessity, and as every thing is esteemed according as its first cause is good or bad, thus it is that we prefer in painting ornament to necessity. And for that reason are also more estimable those Painters who have much invention, than those who possess only mere Imitation. The Arts being therefore composed of both these parts, he will be the greatest master who possesses both. These two parts belong the one to the other, and unite in the following manner; that is, Idea, which is the parent of Taste, is as the Soul whose imitation forms the body. This Soul, or Reason, ought to choose of all the spectacle of Nature, those parts, which according to the human idea are the most beautiful; but ought not to create new parts which are not to be found in Nature; for by that, the Art would be enfeebled, and lose as one might say, its body, and from whence its beauty would become obscure to men. By this Idea I do not mean more than the good choice one makes of things natural, and not that of an invention of things new. If therefore a painting is done in such a manner that it discovers the most beautiful parts of Nature, and that in each part appears natural truth, one shall perceive in the whole good Taste, without prejudice of the part of Imitation.

Here it is necessary to make another reflection, which is of the difference between Taste and Style. Taste, as I have many times said, consists in choice; Style however is a kind of imposition or fiction, and is of two kinds; that is, one which is produced by omitting many parts, and the other which creates and invents many new parts. There are many examples of the one and the other. Those who have sought greatness, have sometimes omitted such parts that the essential one of the object itself has remained changed and destroyed. Others, likewise, have wished to meliorate, and correct the things of their choice, making the great, greater; and the little less, exceeding thus all Nature, as well in form and design, as in colouring and clare obscure, and in all the parts of the Art. True Taste, which nearest arrives to perfection, is that which chooses of the best and most useful parts of Nature, rejecting the useless, and conserving the essential part of any thing. Then the whole is true and of the highest Taste; for in such a case Nature becomes meliorated, but not changed as happens in Style.

C H A P. V.

HISTORY OF TASTE.

SINCE all human things are imperfect, and of the good nothing remains but the will of choice; all the success of our operations depends on choice, and the true grandeur of it; and he is truly great who knows the value of every thing, and of course distinguishes what is more or less great, and what is most estimable, so as to begin from that, and to apply the genius, and fix the desires upon the execution of things worthy and great. In this mode of thinking and acting, the most celebrated and enlightened men of the Arts have distinguished themselves, even from the ancient Greeks to the present time. The greater part have known that which is most worthy in Nature, and upon which they have fixed all their study, and employed all their diligence and industry. The inferior geniuses, because they are attached to mediocrity, believe that in this consists all the Art; and the lowest description of artists remain enchanted at beholding the minutiae of little works, taking them for principal things; inasmuch that human ignorance is become to pass from the trifling to the useless, from the useless to the ugly, and from the ugly to the false and chimerical. The first of those who possessed great Taste were the Grecians;

I do not intend to speak of the first inventors of the Art, but only of those who have carried it to the highest degree of Beauty and good Taste. They knew that the Arts were invented for men; that mankind love nothing so much as themselves, and for that reason Man ought to be the most worthy object of the Arts, on which account they employed the greatest diligence to that part of Nature. Man being of himself more worthy in his natural figure than when decorated with cloathing, they depicted, and formed him, in general naked, excepting only the female sex, which decency and modesty permitted not to appear in this state. They considered man to be the work most worthy of Nature, for the commodiousness and symmetry of his formation which is derived from his aspect, and from the highest disposition and ordination of his members; from whence they were the first to apply themselves principally to proportion. They observed finally, that the strength of man consists in two principal motions, which are the retracting of his members towards the body which forms the centre, and of distending them from the body, or be it centre; and these observations opened them the way to the study of anatomy, and discovered to them the first ideas of significance and expression. Their customs and amusements were very useful to such observations. Their public diversions gave birth to reflection, and from this reflection they arrived to know the cause of that which they saw. From hence they were elevated to their Deity, and

took from human nature those parts which most agreed with the imaginary quality of their God; and in that manner they began their choice. They rejected at first, in forming these figurative Gods, all those parts which characterize human weakness; from whence they made them of human figure, the most perfect in all nature, but not of human quality and defects. This is the derivation of Beauty. At last they found the degree of medium between the Deity and humanity; they united these two parts and thus invented the form of their Heroes. Then it was that the Art arrived to the most sublime degree, because by that union, divine and human, they came to the knowledge of all the proper significations of the good and bad, in figure and in aspect.

Besides the end here mentioned, they had also occasion, by means of their customs, to exercise themselves in accidental things, such as cloathing, drapery, animals, &c. but these parts were only esteemed for that which they merited, since the Art remained only among the powerful and elevated geniuses. So that, therefore, when vile geniuses undertook the Art, and the judgment of works was not pronounced by wise men and philosophers, but by the wealthy and great, the Art decayed by little and little, and at last degenerated to that trifling minutiae above expressed; such, that in those times they produced things the most shocking, absurd, and unjust. In such manner, for instance, have they introduced grotesque, and other

works. Since that time the Art has no longer been subject to reason, but has been abandoned only to chance. If there were any rich person of good Taste, he contented himself by encouraging some Artists to the imitation of those, which even at that time they called ancients; and the beauty of their works were no longer guided by reason, but only by appearance. They worked after the manner of the ancients, without comprehending, or availing of their designs. The great difference which arises from that in works is, that things produced from pure imitation remain always unequal in themselves, and it appears at times that one part is done by some great man, and the other by some ignorant person.

It is therefore necessary that Painters who are imitators, seek not only to imitate the work, but also the motive of its model. When there were successively intelligent persons in the Polite Arts, which happened under some Roman Emperors, one presently beheld some lights, which however were extinguished as soon as they were deprived of aliment. In this manner the Art, and its Taste, have increased and diminished till at last it has been almost destroyed, because Artists have begun to work for want, after the manner of mechanics and journeymen. Thus the Art itself has fallen in discredit, not less among the learned and great men, but among all people, and has remained deprived of the means of raising itself, because it was not founded on human necessity, as are the other Arts and Sciences;

being rather the mark of opulence and wisdom than of necessity, and for that reason ought of course to have rested in oblivion in those barbarous ages, in which all the world, and principally Europe were inundated by wars, and in which men occupied themselves chiefly in devastation and reciprocal oppressions.

When finally the world awakened from that horrible lethargy, and began to replace itself in the appearance of good order, the arts also revived, as one may say, from their state of extinction. Some Artists, the miserable remains of oppressed Greece, who only had a tincture of Painting, because the images were in use in the Catholic church, brought the Art into Italy, but so deformed and imperfect, that one distinguishes in it only the good will or desire of painting; and their poverty, followed by disregard, did not permit them to advance it.

When Painting began to meet with the genius of the Italians, who were then rich and powerful, it was raised in some degree from darkness by different men of genius, among whom is principally distinguished Giotto. But since choice cannot precede knowledge, thus it is that all those who were before Raphael, Correggio, and Titian, sought only pure imitation; and thus in that time there was no Taste, and a Painting was in a certain manner a chaos. Some wished to imitate nature, and could not; others who were able to imitate it, did not; but only chose without knowing how they had chosen. Lastly, in the time of the three great luminaries

of Painting, which is of the said Raphael, Correggio, and Titian, painting as well as sculpture became exalted, but with choice, and from that choice was produced the Taste of the Art. Art being therefore an imitation of all Nature, it is too extensive for the human understanding, and will be always imperfect among men. Such were the Painters before the time of these great men of whom we speak; they chose imperfectly, and rejected from ignorance, one part or another essential. But these three masters coming to the world, chose each a part peculiar, to bestow upon that all his application, and if we may so say, to make all the Art consist in that part.

Raphael chose expression, which he found in composition and design; Correggio sought the pleasing part, which he found in certain forms, principally, however, in clare obscure; and, lastly, Titian embraced the appearance of truth, which he found in the highest degree of colouring. The greatest was naturally he who possessed the part most important; and expression being no doubt the most useful, and the most important part of Painting, Raphael undoubtedly is the greatest of the three. After him follows Correggio, because to delight is the second important part of Painting; and since truth is rather a duty than an ornament, Titian is only the third of the order; but all the three are great, because each were in possession of a principal part of Painting. All those who have come after them have had only a portion of that re-

spective part which they possessed; from whence their taste remained inferior. The ideal part being therefore the first and the greatest part of all the Art, the ancient Grecians have been greater than all the rest, because the choice of their taste comprehended all the sensible perfections.

Thus, according to my opinion, they arrived to such a degree of perfection, first, because they did not attempt to cultivate a field too extensive, so that they could with a talent equal to that of the moderns, rise higher than them, and approach, as we may say, nearer to the centre of perfection. Secondly, because among them ignorant people did not judge of their works, as often happens among us, but this judgment was reserved for learned men and philosophers, as I have already said in another place. Then, as a wise man always judges of the works of another with moderation and discretion, to the contrary the foolish and ignorant seek only to slander and depreciate, and make only pastime at another's prejudice. The ancients, for that reason, seeking more than us true perfection, took a separate part of the Art; they began by the most necessary, and endeavoured rather to perfect that, than to undertake much and to remain imperfect. We, to the contrary, content ourselves in appearing perfect to the eyes of the simple and ignorant, whose money more delights than all the applauses of wisdom which bestows not money; and the study of pleasing the amateurs prevails over reason, and the rules

of the Art. We are indebted for beauty in the Arts to these people, among whom not riches, but reason and wisdom determined the greatness and esteem of a man, where a philosopher was called the greatest man of the city, and a learned man of the Arts was distinguished as a philosopher. In such countries and nations, the Arts arrive to greatness; but it will be difficult in our time for them to return to that degree of elevation. However if any Artists of the present time, would wish, notwithstanding the universal evil, to seek good taste in Painting, I will advise him what ways and means he should pursue, otherwise than which, it appears to me impossible that he can arrive, at this time, to that perfection of the Art.

C H A P. VI.

INSTRUCTIONS TO PAINTERS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A GOOD TASTE.

THERE are two ways by which good Taste can be attained, when reason is our guide. The one which is the most difficult, is that of choosing from nature itself what is most useful and

beautiful; the other more easy, is to learn from works in which the choice is already made.

For the first, the ancients are arrived at perfection; that is to say, in beauty, and in good taste. The major part of the moderns, therefore, after the three aforesaid great luminaries Raphael, &c. have attained it by secondary means.

The three cited great men have built not only the first foundation, but also another in medium, between nature and imitation.

The difficulty of obtaining a good Taste by following nature is great, because there ought to be a discernment, and what is called spiritual philosophy to distinguish among the complex things of Nature, the good, the better, and the best.

In imitation it is more easy to make such a distinction, since one knows and comprehends the works of men more easily than those of nature. To arrive therefore to the true manner of imitation, it requires not to make an abuse of it, and to study well the works of great masters, as much as they have studied nature, otherwise one might ever remain superficial and never comprehend well their beauties. Since infants in their tender years ought to be fed after the manner which agrees with the weakness of their digestion, until by increase of age the fibres become capable of sustaining food more gross and substantial; thus ought also to proceed the weakness of intellect in a youth who is a beginner in the Art. One must not give him directly great

undertakings; that is to say; to accustom him in the beginning to difficult things, and great ideas; for by such his understanding would become erroneous; and confounded; besides it would give him presumption and pride, the young beginners being often carried away by the vanity of thinking they know all that which their masters would teach them. A pupil in the beginning ought therefore to be fed with the most pure and simple aliment of the art; that is, he should be given the most perfect works of the most celebrated professors; which as they are to be judged and distinguished we shall show hereafter:

The principal importance is, that he never sees nor much less imitates in the beginning ugly and imperfect works. He ought only to imitate the beautiful, and to imitate it exactly without entering into the cause of its beauty. By this method he will acquire a precision and justness of the eye, which is the instrument and most necessary requisite of all the Art. When he is arrived to that point, he will begin to reflect with wisdom and discernment on the works of great professors, searching diligently their ideas and motives; which he will do in the following manner: for example, he will review all the works of Raphael, Correggio, and Titian, examining whatever he finds beautiful in each painting; and when he sees in the works of each of them some parts and things always well executed and perfected, it will be a proof that such parts have been the principal object

and choice of that professor. The other parts which he sees executed and perfected in an inferior degree, will show, that those parts have not been their principal object; therefore one ought not to look for Taste or the cause of Beauty in them. There are therefore in painting two principal parts which denote Beauty, which are Form and Colour, and to the first also belongs the clare obscure.

By the Form one divines all the expressions of the different human passions, and with Colour all the quality of things; that is, the hard and soft, the humid and dry, &c. Raphael possessed expression in the most perfect degree, which is the cause of the beauty of his works; and which is to be found in the whole, as well in the most beautiful as the inferior.

He has also coloured his clare obscure sometimes well enough, and at other times very competently; but this kind of Beauty appears not in his works as studied, but only by way of imitation of Nature; for which reason it is only necessary to seek and learn from him the part of expression. Expression is perfect, if for instance, in an historical painting, a man choleric, jocular, melancholy, or of other such passions, is represented with such respectively, and which are expressed in that proportion and measure which the subject it represents requires; so that one may know the history from the figures, without being compelled to explain the history of those figures. If in the same manner one reviews the works of Correggio, one

shall observe much more attraction than in any other painter.

It is necessary therefore to know in what consists this attraction. Painting becomes attractive by means of the eyes, and these find their pleasure in repose. To procure them therefore this repose, and that attraction, nothing in painting is better adapted than clare obscure and harmony. These requisites form the principal part of Correggio. If one observes all his works one finds in the whole these parts. In the mean time that he seeks to repose and please the eye, he finds also grandeur of features, and because all little parts are more fastidious to the eye than those which are great, this therefore is the cause of his Beauty. Titian lastly sought truth, but not after the same manner of Raphael. He represented man entire, and principally the mind, the sentiments, and the passions. Titian sought truth only in matter, as well in man as in any other thing; therefore he applied himself to express the being and quality of things with those colours which were adapted to them, and he succeeded wonderfully. In his works, every thing has those colours which it properly ought to have. The flesh which he painted, appears to have blood, fat, humidity, muscles and veins; by which he produced that great appearance of truth. This is therefore the part one ought to study in him, and which will be found in all his works, as well in the most perfect as in the inferior.

These are the causes of the effects, and of the

beauties of these three great men; and by this same method one ought to seek Beauty and the causes of it in any other great painter. I have shewn what is that method; when I have said that one must study, or observe what is constantly found in the works of a master. In this manner one becomes capable of comprehending the motives which arises from their natural sentiments; and now I shall explain how we have been able to form of these sentiments a proper Taste. It is necessary to know that these three men were learned, and possessed a kind of philosophical understanding, as I have already said upon another occasion; from which they comprehended that man could not be perfect in all his parts, for which reason they chose each of them, those separate parts in which they believed consisted the greatest perfection, and by which they could move and please first themselves, and next other people. All the three therefore have the same end in view, which is to please, and to move; but no one can succeed in this intent in material works, if he does not show the cause of this pleasure, and that this effect had been produced in himself by a similar cause in Nature. This is exactly the case with the aforesaid professors. They expressed that which they felt; and as each of them took a part peculiar to himself, and different from the others, from this arises the propriety of their respective genius's. It was necessary that Raphael should have had moderate passions and an ardent spirit, which produced in

him ideas full of expression, and made him find pleasure in all that which had much significance. In Correggio, one finds a spirit mild and soft, which gave him an aversion to all that which is too powerful and expressive; and made him choose only such parts as were pleasing and tender. Titian lastly had less spirit than even those two, and more of materiality; so that he felt and chose only the parts of Nature. Raphael for that reason always remained the first of the three.

I have said in the beginning, that Taste arises from knowing how to choose some parts, and to reject others which have not their necessary quality; and in this, Taste in the Arts is like that of the palate, because we call sweet, sour, bitter, &c. those things which have no other flavour, and in which the same is found predominant: also in the Arts, a work is said to be pleasing, true, significant, &c. always when these qualities are not embarrassed and confused, but that one of them predominates, and all that which is useless be therein rejected.

Thus Raphael in the invention of his works, began directly by an expression of style, which never moves any member when it was not absolutely necessary for assisting that expression. To the contrary, he never gave to any figure or member a stroke of the pencil without some motive, which served the principal expression. Of the formation of man even to the least movement, all serve in the works of Raphael as a principal motive; from whence having re-

jected all that which has no expression, his works are full of expressive Taste. The cause therefore by which the works of Raphael do not please all people equally at first sight, is, that their beauties are founded on reason, and not solely in appearance; so that they are not felt at first sight, but only when they have penetrated into the imagination, and many persons are of a penetration so feeble, that they do not perceive any thing of the Beauty of that great Painter.

Since Raphael's principal object was expression, thus he has given to each figure a different expression and significance, according as the history of his Painting required; and possessing this expression in all the parts of Painting, this has become his natural and peculiar Taste. In the same manner, that is, in leaving and rejecting all that which is useless, and serve not the principal object, Correggio has acquired a grateful and pleasing Taste, and Titian that of truth.

In order not to leave any obscurity in this little work, I shall now proceed to explain even more diffusely the Taste of these three celebrated men, by examining and explaining it by all the parts of Painting such as I have found in their works, and in every part thereof. I shall begin by Design, passing from thence to the clear obscure, Colouring, Composition, Drapery and Harmony, in order thus to confirm what I have already said of their Taste.

PART THE THIRD.

EXAMPLES OF TASTE.

CH A P. I.

CONSIDERATIONS UPON THE DESIGN OF RA- PHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN; AND UP- ON THEIR INTENTIONS IN THE CHOICE OF THE SAME.

RAPHAEL has not been always alike. He began also in the alphabet of the Art before he was able to express his ideas. He had however the happiness to be born in the time of true innocence, and in the infancy of the Art; from whence he learnt in the beginning to imitate only pure truth; and this in time accustomed him to great exactness of the eye; which served him as a basis and foundation for the magnificent edifice of his profession.

Until that moment, he did not know what it was to make a choice; but when he saw at Florence the works of Leonardo da Vinci, and of Michael Angelo, it awakened his great spirit, and his ardent mind was urged to think of more than simple imitation. These works had notwithstanding a kind of choice and grandeur; but in themselves they were not sufficiently beautiful to serve our Raphael as a guide to the choice of a good Taste; because a thing which is intended to communicate itself to others, and to serve as a true model, ought to be not only just but perfectly beautiful. On this account he therefore remained for some time in a kind of obscurity, and advanced himself only by slow steps; but when at last he saw in Rome the works of the ancients, then he found his proper genius to inflame him. He had formed as a basis the justness of the eye, from whence he did not find it difficult to imitate the ancients in the same manner as he had imitated Nature; but with all that, he never left the custom of following always Nature, and learnt only of the ancients to make a good choice of the same. He found, that they had not generally followed it in its minutiae; but had chosen only the necessary and beautiful parts, and rejected the superfluous; from whence he found consisted one of the beauties of the ancients in their designs, and from this he first meliorated the Art in that point. He comprehended, nevertheless, that in the admirable construction of the human body, the articulation of the bones and members formed

their agility, and that the ancients had made it their greatest study and care; and in that as well as every other thing, he did not content himself, as many other great Painters have done, by the external imitation of the ancients, but he studied and examined the cause of their Beauty. I do not doubt nevertheless that if Raphael had had the occasion to form only ideal figures, he would still have accustomed himself more to the best works of antiquity. But since the customs of his time were very different from those of the ancient Grecians, and great ideas were already converted into low and base ones; he with a genius naturally elevated, found nothing in the usages of his time that would content him except Expression. This he found in part in the ancients, but more in the cognition of Nature; from them he contented himself to take the principal forms, and very often chose from Nature that which they nearest approached; then led on by his great genius, he advanced to examine the expression of each separate form, from which he found that certain lineaments of aspect carry in themselves also certain expressions, and are natural to certain temperaments; as also, that to a certain face appertain such and such members, hands, feet, &c. and these he united with the greatest exactness, making the aspect thus uniform with the movements and figure. Then when he proceeded to the exercise of designing, he thought always anew upon the principal motive; first of the measure and primary form;

from thence of the arrangement of the bones, and the articulation, to the principal muscles and nerves, and lastly to the small veins, and even to the wrinkles where they occurred. One sees therefore the principal parts always distinct, and raised in his works, and if he failed in any thing in his design, it was certainly only in the least and accidental parts.

His inferior works also are testimonies of the perspicuity of his genius, because if he only sketched any thing, it immediately shewed signs of a principal and important object; and that which was wanting was always very trifling in comparison to that which existed: the necessary part was never wanting, but the superfluous always. He is expressive even in his trifling pieces; his flesh is round, his nerves straight, the bone angular, and every thing is more or less according to its proper quality; and, in a word, all is truth in his works.

That which has been here said, will be sufficient for him who would wish to think for himself upon the subject of the design of Raphael. I shall therefore in this place treat of the design of Correggio.

Correggio was born eleven years after Raphael, when the art was found in the same state of simplicity.

He began to study almost only the imitation of Nature, and since he pursued more a grateful and pleasing genius, than a perfect one, he found out the way at the beginning, by means of uniformity, and depriving his drawing of every

angular and acute part. When he advanced in the art he was convinced by the clare obscure, that grandeur adds much to the pleasing parts; then he began to relinquish the minutiae and to aggrandize the form, by imitating entirely the angles, and thus he produced a kind of sublime Taste even in design, which was not always conformable to truth. He drew his outlines in a serpentine manner. In general his design was not too just, but great, and pleasing. One ought not to depreciate the studious Painter, but it is necessary also to try to cull the honey from those flowers, that is to say to avail of those beauties which are to be found in nature, wherever the circumstance and quality of things permit it. When Correggio has sometimes designed any part of a beautiful object, he has joined the beautiful by way of imitation: This will be sufficient to give an idea of the design of that Painter.

Titian was his contemporary. He has no part of design except that of Nature, which he imitated well, always when he found it beautiful; since he possessed a great justness of the eye, which was as one might say natural to all the Painters of that time; and if all had known how to make their choice as well as Raphael, all would have been like him perfect in designing. Since I do not find it necessary to say more upon the design of Titian, I will proceed to give reflections upon the clare obscure of these three Professors.

C H A P. II.

**CONSIDERATIONS UPON THE CLARE OBSCURE
OF RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN.**

RAPHAEL had not in the beginning the least idea of clare obscure, and sought only to imitate Nature. Since therefore simple imitation without choice cannot produce beautiful things, his works were in this part without beauty. Afterwards, when he went to Florence, and saw the works of those Professors, then he found out that there was a certain greatness in clare obscure, and profiting by the acquaintance of Friar Bartholomy of Saint Mark, and of the works of Masacci, he found that he ought not to place great folds of drapery in a piece, or any other heavy thing which would take from its effect. He began thus no longer to work without distinction of nature; he searched that part which is called **MASS**, and he united his light in the place most elevated, as well in the dressed figures as in those naked. In this manner there appeared in his works such a clearness, that although at a distance one could easily comprehend and distinguish any of his figures; which is a most useful and necessary part in the Art of Painting. Then when he saw in Rome the

works of the ancients, he was confirmed still more in that taste, and by imitation of the same he acquired a great discernment in the rotundity of all the parts, which knowledge only at the last he had arrived to. He has certainly made sometimes *MASSÉS* of painting, but since his principal aim was always directed to expression and truth, he contented himself with that part of *clare obscure* which comes from imitation and not from idea. It was his custom to place the greatest *clare obscure* upon the front figures, as if all the drapery and things similar were of the same colour. He forced the *clare* of his front figures even to a white, and all the *obscure* to almost a black; and this custom he derived from the habit of painting always his histories upon small models, making few sketches, by which he discovered in his figures such light and shade as if they were all done and shadowed upon the statues, that is to say, the nearer they were to the eye, the more they would be raised in the *clare obscure*; and the greater distance they were from the sight the flatter they appeared. The greatest masters in *clare obscure* are not found thus; and in which it is better not always to imitate Raphael, but rather Correggio.

Correggio produced his works at first solely from Nature, but since he was of a sensibility so delicate, he could not suffer the harshness of his masters. He began first to relinquish the little internal parts, and to make each more flexible and tender; but he found himself always constrained by the sterile form of simple nature to

place the clear colours so near the obscure that these frequent variations were offensive to the sight. For that reason he dedicated himself to search with all his delicacy more profoundly in nature, and he knew that all that which is great is rendered pleasing to the eye by that tranquillity and sweet commotion which arises from the same; for which reason he began to aggrandize his principal figures.

He saw nevertheless that in wishing to imitate nature, the too clear colours constrained him from loading his paintings with many things; from which he studied and renewed the mode of using less clare than his masters had used. He placed the body in such a manner that only one part became illuminated, from whence almost only the half of a figure became clare and the other half obscure; but since obscurity has almost always an ungraceful appearance, thus he found that the reflection of light would be well adapted to render a painting pleasing. From this began to discontinue all his obscurity, and thus with a little clare and various reverberations, he arrived to obtain much of greatness, and to avoid the trifling, much of brightness, and nothing dazzling: he obtained, in short, the most beautiful appearance. As he knew that all things, and especially colours, from the greater or less impression of light and shade, became more or less beautiful, for that reason he never destroyed the clearness of their body, even in obscurity, except in case of absolute necessity; and by these means he produced the same clearness of

Raphael with much more sweetness, and his works appear so much the more powerful as they are seen from a farther distance. At first, before he arrived to the perfection of his Taste, there remained in the extremities of his clare something curtailed; an effect which one observes even in Nature itself, when the light takes it latterally, and is very powerful; but finally, he arrived to that point which gives to all things the most perfect elegance and beauty. He did not succeed in all his works like Raphael, but he placed the light and shade in that part where he found it had the best effect. If the clare came of itself in that part where he desired, he there placed it, otherwise he put in that place some lucid or opaque matter, such as flesh, drapery, or any other thing similar, in a manner that it could arrive to that aspect which he desired; and thus he invented a kind of ideal Beauty in the clare obscure. Besides that, he produced also a kind of harmony in the clare obscure, by disposing and distributing his lights so, that the most powerful of them, as well as the greatest of the obscure should appear only in one situation of the Painting. By his aforesaid delicate sensibility, he comprehended besides, that the violent contrapositions of light and shade, produced always a kind of roughness; for that reason he did not put black by the side of white, as many other professors have done, who in appearance like him, have sought Beauty in clare obscure; but he gradually made his variations of colours, placing after white, not directly a black, but an ash

colour, and after a black a dark grey, and thus his works always remained soft and natural. He always avoided to place together equal masses of clare and obscure, and where he found a situation for powerful light and shade, he did not join another similar, but placed in the interval a large piece of half tint, by which he conducted the eye to a kind of repose. With such continued variation, he became capable of amusing the eye of the spectator, by an uninterrupted and grateful motion; and as one never tires to behold a work, in which is found always new objects of delight, for that reason Correggio is esteemed as the greatest master of that kind. The part of clare obscure in Painting, is more necessary than is generally believed; this is distinguished and comprehended, not less by the ignorant than by the intelligent and wise; but Design is known only to the last. When the clare obscure is disposed in a work in such a manner, and with such perfection as by Correggio, this only is sufficient to render it worthy of every applause and esteem. I advise therefore all Painters to observe Correggio attentively, and to imitate him if they can.

Titian, who likewise took for his basis the imitation of Nature, did not possess much choice in clare obscure; and if in his works are sometimes found Beauty of this kind, it is not derived from the study of it, but rather the effect of his colouring; because in the mean time that he sought to imitate Nature in that, he saw that it would be impossible to follow it

without having regard to its degree of light; from whence he found, that a sky to appear natural, ought to be painted of a light colour, such being the colour of the sky; that the earth ought to be less clear than the sky, and even less than the flesh. Such reflections conducted him sometimes to a kind of Beauty in the clare obscure, but this is as I have said an effect of the quality of his colouring. Having sought the imitation of Nature in the highest degree, one cannot say that he has been ignorant of the part of clare obscure.

In fact, I have no intention to say, that he was wanting in that part, but only that it was not the cause of his Beauty; that the part peculiar to him was colouring; and that there often appeared a roughness, and generally a vulgarity in his clare obscure, principally when he sought the contraposition; from which one easily sees that he did not apply the greatest diligence to that part, contented himself with as much of it only as is necessary to express the quality of things. We shall now proceed to treat of the colouring of these three professors.

C H A P. III.

*CONSIDERATIONS UPON THE COLOURING OF
RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN.*

HAVING once began the examination of these three famous Painters, by nominating Raphael the first; I shall proceed also by the same method in this part, notwithstanding he has generally been held in this rather as the last of the three. Raphael learnt Painting in the beginning, by water colours, according to the custom of his time; and that style of colouring being more difficult than the others, he retained, like his masters, a crude taste in colouring. He arrived then to paint in fresco, in which one cannot make much use of Nature, being obliged to work in great measure from invention. Thus he formed a kind of habit which removed him very distant from the delicacy of Nature. From Father Bartholomy of Florence he obtained the use of a principal and good gradation of colours, which also remained peculiar to him, and since at the same time he learnt to paint very well in oil, he improved and carried also his Painting in fresco to a tolerable degree of taste, but that notwithstanding in comparison to the other two masters, remained always rough and ordinary in the colouring. I

do not for that reason treat much of him in this particular ; sufficient to say, that one ought not in this part to take the Paintings of Raphael for a model, but rather those of Titian.

Correggio began by Painting in oil, and that being most adapted to a certain delicacy, he soon caught the style which gives such force to his Paintings. By way of clare obscure, he saw that colours which are not forcible and transparent, cannot express true shade ; therefore he chose transparent colours, and a kind of veil, to make that appear truly obscure which ought so to be.

The cause why true colours, which are not forcible, cannot form a true shade, is, because the rays of light rest upon their surface, from whence they appear certainly obscure, but at the same time illuminated ; whereas forcible colours admit those rays, and their surface remains therefore truly obscure. He comprehended it therefore, to be so much the more necessary to impaste well the clare, because their body ought to be of such a quality, that from the light of the day they could receive a greater clearness. From the knowledge that obscure colours belong to darkness, and clear colours to light, he comprehended, that although all darkness is black, light, notwithstanding it comes from the sun, is not white, but rather inclined to yellow. And that all reflection ought to be of a colour equal to that body from which it is derived. From that he obtained in

his works the true knowledge of the three parts of light, shadow, and reflection.

Principally, in Correggio, the colours of shadowing are very excellent. By too much affection which he had for the clare obscure, he made his lights too clear and pure; which makes the same appear always somewhat ordinary, and the flesh not sufficiently transparent. In this part Correggio added something to Nature, and did rather that which the clare obscure required, than that which is truly the property of matter.

Titian, who likewise began to paint in the age of imitation, and studied also in oil colours, was soon led by his sensibility to the quality of things. Since he painted figures, as well as landscapes from Nature, he acquired from that a true and essential knowledge; and the custom of taking portraits served him as the highest exercise, because he was constrained to paint different particular and minute things, as also different drapery, and other things of grand, forcible, and vivid colours; so that he was obliged to study the method to accord and unite well all those different things. And since he observed, that such as is pleasing in Nature, might easily have a bad effect in Painting, thus he endeavoured to imitate Nature to perfection. He comprehended, that in Nature are to be found also things of beautiful and vivid colours, but but that these become also easily destroyed by reflection, by the porousness of their body, colour of light, and other such things; as also that in all objects are found many half tints; and by

that he arrived to a great harmony in his compositions. Lastly, he discovered, that in Nature, every thing has a different composition, and connection of transparency of repletion, of smoothness, &c. and that every thing has its tint and different security; from whence he fought in the imitation of that diversity, the perfection of the Art, and he found it also by a constant and continual imitation of Nature.

At last he took from each part the most of the whole, that is, he made entirely of half tint, that flesh which had naturally much half tint, and he made almost entirely without such tint that which had little; thus the red almost without tint, and the same in all the other colours, (but always imitating truth). From thence arises in his works the grand taste of colouring, in a manner, that in that respect, he is the most excellent and truest model of imitation.

He found by the distinction of principal colours, also the principal mass, such as Raphael found in Design, and Correggio in clare obscure,

C H A P. IV.

*CONSIDERATIONS UPON THE COMPOSITION
OF RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN.*

WISHING to treat of Composition, or be it of the union of figures, I may justly begin with Raphael, and it is not necessary, that on this occasion I should make an excuse, or justification, since that was his peculiar part. Raphael who was brought up near the truth, sought it in himself, and found it united with expression. He began with the greatest innocence, and was in the beginning, cold, though true, until maturity of years discovered to him more lively impressions. His genius, which I have said on another occasion to be philosophical, was moved only by that which has expression. He felt more the virtues than the vices of human nature: (except, as it is said, one only vice). He was made for truth, which could not elevate itself above him. He sought the best in man, but could not entirely abandon humanity, with the happy success of the ancient Grecian Painters. Their genius hovered between the heavens and the earth; but Raphael proceeded with sublimity, and majesty on earth alone. He received the first idea of figurative expression, when he saw the works of Masaccio, and the cartons of Leonardo da Vinci.

According to them he considered Nature in all its essence, and principally the passions of the mind, and how these influence the body. When Raphael invented and composed any painting, he thought first of the whole of its significance, that is, of what it ought to represent; then in how many different attitudes man could be painted, and which would be the strongest, and which would be the lightest; which would be the proper to this, or to that man; how many and what men he could introduce in such a painting, and in what situation each ought to be arranged; that is, at what distance from the principal object, to express this or that sentiment; and thus he judged also if such painting would become large or small. If it were large, he thought what relation the principal history or expression of the principal group would have with the other figures; if the history were momentary, or of duration; if in this description it were sufficiently expressive; if any anterior action had relation with the present, or if to that followed quickly any other event; if it were a tranquil and simple story, or extraordinary violent, cheerful, or confused; tragically simple or tragically-confused.

After having thought of all these, he then chose of the most necessary, and accordingly that regulated his principal idea, which he conducted sufficiently clear and intelligible. Then he gradually arranged all the ideas according to their dignity, placing always the most necessary before those which were less so,

and from thence he deduced that if in such a work any thing was wanting, it was only the least important, and never the most beautiful or necessary. In other Painters to the contrary, one sees that very often is wanting the necessary part, and that they have studied grace only in the superfluous. When therefore he began to think of the particular figures, he did not apply himself, as many others have done, first to the beautiful attitude, and afterwards to consider if that figure were apt and proper to his history; but he reflected immediately in what situation man would be found if he were truly affected by the passions which were there represented; then he considered what sentiments man must first have had in that event, and lastly in what expressions they ought to be represented, and of what parts and members he had occasion to convey his idea. To these then he gave the greatest motion and action, by leaving dormant all the rest. From this it proceeds that in Raphael one often sees attitudes entirely simple and straight, which nevertheless appear to be as beautiful in their situation as those in the greatest motion; because a simple figure without action has perhaps an expression appertaining to the inward man, that is the soul; and the other of much action, ought to represent only an external motion. In this manner, Raphael reflected in every work, of each group, figure, member, and each part of a member, and even of the hair, and drapery, as I shall speak of in another place. He conveyed in his history the internal emotions. In

one of his speaking figures one sees also by the face if he speaks with tranquility, resentment, or with heat: in a thinking figure of his, one discovers what he thinks, and in all the passions which have great expression, one sees if it be the beginning, the middle, or end of that emotion. One could write an entire book respecting the expression of Raphael. I know however, that the little which I have said will be sufficient for those who know how to think for themselves; and that it is also too much for those who do not wish to take the pains to apply themselves to that subject. I do not write for such persons, as I know they will not read, or cannot comprehend the spirit of these reflections. Nor can also the idle person complain of not having had the works of Raphael to study; since those who know how to think, and have not the convenience of seeing him in the original, will find him in the Engravings of Mark Anthony, of Augustino Veneziano, and of others, who although somewhat feeble, are however always sufficient for those who have a desire to learn; and those who do not thus learn, would not even if they had before their eyes all the originals of Raphael, and all the beauties of Nature. These are in that part condemned to ignorance. I conclude that Raphael has arrived to great Taste in Expression, by having rejected all the useless and insignificant parts; and all that which he has placed in his works, he has chosen in such a manner that it becomes as useful and necessary to the subject as meat and drink to an entertainment.

Correggio whose genius was formed from grace, could not endure things of such expression. The powerful, the sad, the expressive in him, are like children's tears, which soon are converted into laughter; and his anger is like that of a beautiful mistress. His genius always flowed in grateful and pleasing sentiments, and never slumbered, by reason of the sensible pleasure which it experienced. In all things which he had to represent, one never finds any effort except that to please. The powerful style was to him an horror. He was the first who invented paintings with other objects besides that of Truth; and none before him has ever taken the beauty of appearance as the principal view of a work in painting.

The narrow limits of his antecessors were for him too confined, and finding the grandeur of the parts of clare obscure, he broke the boundaries of their swelling floods, and carried his spectators to a sea of pleasure. Thus his Graces, like attractive Syrens, have seduced some painters, and cast them away on the shore of error; because whoever imitates his figures without his sentiments, will not find the good or the beautiful, either for themselves or for others. Correggio began by imitating Nature and his masters; but he did not continue a long time that mode. It was natural to him to evitate any limited thing. In his first idea it appears that he only thought of exposing to the eye something pleasing. His inventions are formed only by way of sentiment, and not by way of reflection. He sought

to represent his figures in a manner that would show a great mass of clear obscure, rather than expression, the grateful excepted, which his sensibility often found. A painter will here conclude that Correggio possessed a graceful and pleasing taste, because he always avoided those things which were not of that description; so that where this pleasing part will have a good effect, there Correggio is to be imitated; but he is inimitable where one searches expression. I advise therefore all painters not to study Correggio if they have not sensibility like him. When a painter, in the mean time that he invents, can transform himself, as one may say, into that which he would wish to imitate, he will imitate well; if he cannot, it will always be better to follow that which he feels of himself.

Titian had generally little sensibility, and invented rather according to the general rules in use, than by genius, from whence he is not to be followed in that part. He has sometimes invented figures beautiful enough, but one may believe that it has happened more from chance than skill, since it is presently by the side of one that is low and ordinary.

C H A P. V.

*CONSIDERATIONS ON THE DRAPERY OF RA-
PHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN.*

IN speaking of Drapery, it will appear another time, that I study to elogise Raphael. In the beginning he followed his masters in this part, and improved himself much by means of the works of Masacci, but still more by means of those of Father Bartholomy of St. Mark. Then, when he saw the works of the ancients, he abandoned entirely the school of his masters, and availed himself of the rules of bas-relief to dispose naturally the drapery, and thus he acquired the best Taste in his folds. He observed that the ancients had regarded the Drapery, not as a principal object, but as accidental; that they had dressed, but not hid the nudity of the figures, that these were covered, not with rags, but with true and useful linen; neither small as a napkin, or large as a sheet, but made according to the degree of size, and action of each figure. He saw that the ancients made the folds also large upon the largest parts of the human body, and that they did not discompose those said great parts with any thing minute; and when they were constrained to do it on account of the nature of the Drapery, they made the folds so little elevated, and so small, that they could not signify a princi-

pal part. Upon such examples also he made the drapery large, that is, without superfluous folds, and placed his folding in the joints of the members, without ever taking by this from the effect of the figure. He regulated the form of the fold according to the naked form which was under. If the part or muscle was large, he made also a large mass; and where the parts were confined and abridged, he made also the same number of folds, though not so large. In his best time he observed that a member in a loose drapery ought not to be expressed but in one part; but after that he sometimes marked it at two parts in loose folds. Where the drapery was free, that is, where nothing was under, he took great care to give to his folds the same size of a member, but he marked it by a large aperture and plait, or in a form entirely different from that of the member.

In his drapery he did not search all the folds, in order to place in his work the most beautiful, but only to choose those which were adapted to express the nudity which was under. He made the form of these as different as are the muscles of the human body: none were round or square, because the square form is incompatible with folds, except where they are divided and form two triangles. He had likewise the folds of that part which was near, greater than of that part which was remote. To any guarded part he did not make the folds long, nor to a long part plaits short and triangular. He made the fold and

aperture great only upon the empty, and he never placed two together of equal greatness; neither by way of clare obscure in the elevation, or in the contours; nor also of equal form and force. His loose drapery is admirably beautiful. One beholds in the same, that the general cause of their motion is the air. It is not like that of others, drawn or suspended, but each fold is in contraposition with another only according to the liberty and nature of its quality. He discovered in some parts the edges of the drapery, to denote that his figures were not dressed in sacks. All his folds have their motives, either by their proper weight, or by the action of the members. Sometimes one sees in what position they were before they took that form, and one observes, that he even studied expression in that part. One sees also by the fold of a leg or an arm, whether that motion was either before or behind. If ever a member was contracted, one could judge if it were before extended; if extended, one could likewise judge if it were before contracted. Also in the principal motion, he observed that always the drapery when it covers the half of the members, leaves the other half uncovered, passing obliquely, and making generally a triangular form. However, the triangular folds are natural, because drapery being contracted at one side, extends at the other, and thus produces a triangular form. If then I have said, that Raphael like the ancients, has regarded drapery as a thing accidental, by that one ought to understand, that he compre-

hended man and the motion of his members to be the sole motive of the suspension of the rayments with which he is covered, and of the variety of their folds; from whence he conducted the same to their cause, by regulating them according to that which they required, and believed it necessary to hide, and not to make appear in them any diligence in the choice: these reflections will be fruit of him, for whoever would wish to study drapery, and to confront with them what I have said.

As Raphael directed every thing towards the Taste of expression; thus Correggio had always in view in his drapery that of pleasing. He quickly abandoned the custom of his predecessors, and since he painted mostly upon small models, which he dressed in rags, and even with papers, thus he studied the mass, and in this the gracefulness, rather than the justness of each plait; from whence it is that in this drapery, one sees, although grand and airy, a bad folding.

When sometimes he painted from Nature, he did not make a good choice in the folds, and often hid or destroyed with them, the naked figure. Otherwise he made them beautiful, or at least of rich colours; and often also obscure, in order to render the flesh more lucid and clear.

As Titian was in all things worthy of imitation, he was therefore very excellent in drapery. He painted it sufficiently beautiful, and with great truth, in colours clear and brilliant, and among

other things, he made the linen very glossy and clear, but the whole without choice of folds; for which reason he did not discover true Nature, and is not to be imitated in that part.

C H A P T E R VI.

*CONSIDERATION UPON THE HARMONY OF
RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO AND TITIAN.*

WE now proceed to the Harmony of these three great masters; and here also, were it not to follow the order once established, I should be almost silent on the part of Raphael. As he never dedicated himself to any particular thought of pleasing, but only to expression, thus he did very little in that part; and if such is to be found in his works, it is derived rather from the imitation of Nature, than from any particular knowledge.

Correggio to the contrary, is oppositely distinguished. In the mean time that he sought to please and could not endure too much brilliancy, he formed also Harmony the parent of pleasure, and the offspring of a tender sensibility, nor consists in any thing more than the art of finding a medium between two different things, as well in Design, as clare ob-

scure and colouring. From whence Correggio, as I have said in the considerations upon Design, avoided all angles, and made all his contours serpentine. An angle is a conjunction of two streight lines, and this was a thing insufferable to our Correggio; on which account he gave them a curve, and in that manner made his contours harmonious. In the same manner he introduced the half of clare obscure and colouring. Besides that, he observed better than any other Painter, that the eyes after some effort require repose; for that reason, when he had placed in its situation any lively, beautiful, or very powerful colour; he then did a piece of half tint, before passing again to those colours, which he did always gradually, and with less force in the beginning than at the end, in a manner, that the eye of the spectator is conducted as by different degrees, from one lively and splendid object to another; a passage grateful and pleasing, like his who sleeps and is awakened by the sound of harmonious instruments.

When I say that Correggio has passed from the powerful to the tender, and from this to the medium, I intend to denote, that one can thus without obstacle pass quickly from fatigue to repose, but not, without fastidiousness, from repose to fatigue. One may also demand from what motive I have begun with the powerful, and not rather with the medium, which I have placed at the last: I reply, that it ought to be the consideration of a Painter, to begin always

by the anterior part of a Painting, by passing from thence to that which is behind; or rather by the primary object, then turning from hand to hand towards the sides; and since the powerful, the beautiful, and the important in Painting ought always to be found in front, or in the principal situation of the history; thus I have thought fit to begin with the powerful; and as the whole should appear as done for the principal object, the Painter ought to give it the best appearance, and to embellish it only with the remains; from whence the primary object ought to contain expression, and the others rest: this Correggio observed in the perfection of his colouring, and clare obscure; but in Design he made abuse of harmony, and of pleasing. However he it is to be excused, because Design is not that part which he most required for harmony. We are however indebted to him for all that gracefulness and harmoniousness which Painting was deprived of before his time. He has the honour to be in that part, not only the inventor, but also in the execution he arrived to a higher degree than any other, nor has he ever yet been surpassed. In this respect he is by himself; nor is there him who can compare with him. I would speak of him alone in this if I had not promised to treat of all the three professors throughout the principal parts of the Art; for which reason it is necessary to say something of Titian.

Titian possessed also a kind of Harmony, but it appeared in his works by way of imitation of

Nature. There is not in him as in Correggio, a graduate reflection of that part: however he is assisted in uniformity, by the means of which he appears harmonious.

CHAP. VII.

COMPARISON OF THE TASTE OF THE ANCIENTS, AND THEIR INTENTIONS IN THE CHOICE OF IT; LIKEWISE THAT OF THE MODERNS.

SINCE every Painter has chose some particular thing in the pursuit of perfection, thus also have the Ancients. Among all the Painters who have lived since the polite Arts have been almost found anew, one observes a universal cause, and one sole inclination; that is to say, the imitation of Nature: this is the principal aim of all, with the sole distinction, that they have sought it by different ways. In the same manner also among ancient Grecian Painters, notwithstanding their diversity, there was one principal view, but much more sublime than that of the moderns. Exalting their ideas even to the same perfection, they took the medium between the highest perfection, and humanity; that is to say, they

took true Beauty for their principal object, contenting themselves to take from truth only Expression: for that reason, Beauty is to be found in all their works. Among all the parts of expression, none were so powerful as to predominate over Beauty.

I think, therefore, I am empowered to call the Taste of the ancients that of Beauty and perfection; and since wine mixed with water preserves always the flavour of wine, thus their works, although deteriorated by humanity, conserve always the taste of perfection, and for that reason are called perfect. The works of the ancients are in themselves very different with regard to bounty and expression, but not in Taste. We have three principal classes of the ancient monuments of the Arts; that is to say, in all the statues which have remained, are three different degrees of Beauty. The most inferior of these statues have also in them great Taste, but only in the parts of pure necessity; those of the second class, not only in the necessary parts, but also in the useful; and finally those of the first and sublime class, contain the necessary, useful, and even the superfluous, and are therefore perfectly beautiful. Beauty being therefore in itself nothing more than the perfection of each idea, for that reason is called beautiful as much in the thing visible as invisible, that which is the most perfect; therefore it is necessary to view in the same manner, also the works of the ancients; that is, that their Beauty consists not always in one, and the same

part, but that the chosen part be represented perfectly. The statues of the most sublime degree, are the Laocoon and the Torso of Belvedere, and the Gladiator of Borgnese. Of this third degree, there is not an infinity of number, and of the inferior degree it is not necessary to make mention. The great professors among the ancients, were more sublime in their ideas than what the moderns have been, and also in their execution they were more grand and more happy, because their ideas were formed upon perfection, and in the execution they followed not one part as the moderns have done, but the whole of Nature. As the moderns have shown in one work, one only intention, thus, the ancients in each part, show that diversity of intention with which Nature has been formed. Among the moderns, Correggio loved the pleasing style, and Raphael the expressive.

Then as in a muscle, for example, the tendon is more expressive than the flesh, which however is more pleasing, therefore Raphael marked more the tendon than the flesh, and Correggio more the flesh than the tendon. The ancient Grecians however, knew how to unite the one and the other, since they knew that the tendons as well as the flesh, have each their different beauties. The moderns have always sought to diminish one part, in order to aggrandize the other: the Grecians did not do this, but only changed these parts according to their expression. If the figure were human, they adapted to it all that which appertains to the

property and quality of man. If on the contrary it were divine, they abandoned the human quality, and sought only divinity: thus they regulated themselves according to the different significations.

When they formed a man, they endeavoured not to leave out any thing, but to render at the same time more visible that which is necessary to expression, than that which is not necessary.

I conclude from all that I have said, that the Painter who would wish to obtain a good, or be it the best Taste, ought to learn from the ancients the TASTE OF BEAUTY, from Raphael the TASTE OF EXPRESSION, from Correggio that of PLEASING, AND OF HARMONY, and from Titian that of TRUTH AND OF COLOURING. All this therefore, he ought to seek in Nature, because that which I have written or explained in this work, has only for object to make known to the beginners of the Art, the touchstones on which they ought to prove and examine their own Taste and that of others, in order not to deceive their judgment. As the models of which I have spoken, have been so many times imitated, without any having been able to surpass them, it is therefore a true evidence, that these three great masters had taken the right road to perfection, and for that reason I have made use of them for example, and have shown the manner how to know and imitate them. He who will labour diligently, and reflect seri-

ously upon what I have said, will find his day of profit, by following a good Taste.*

* ANNOTATION BY D'AZARA.

Menges said, and with truth, that the Ancients introduced in their compositions few figures, in order that their beauty should not be too comprehensible and manifest; and that the Moderns fill their Paintings as much as possible, that one may less discern their defects. The Cortonian School, and the Neapolitan which has been formed after it (the two now reigning schools in Italy) have for rule in their compositions, to fill with figures and objects a great space, and to leave nothing of open field. They have no regard that nothing is insignificant, or that nothing confounds the composition; it is sufficient that the attitudes and the colours form a contrast, and have what they call an effect; thus, it is not expression or idea, but the space which they have filled that principally occupies their minds. I have seen green and blue faces in the paintings of Corrado, because he thought it would have a wonderful contrast with those of other colours.

As this is a new thing, they have likewise invented new terms, calling themselves MACCHINISTI, and they say that every one who composes coherently with the subject, and with only the necessary figures, without contortions, and without caricature, will be a cold, and inanimate painter, deprived of fire and talent. Lastly in that, as in other things, has prevailed a certain spirit over judgement, and Taste is therefore become corrupted.

It will aid this proposition to recount a passage of Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise upon painting, since it is well known that although that Author wrote when the Arts in Italy were yet in their infancy, yet he gives us to understand, that reason triumphs always when preoccupation does not stifle it.

He says thus. "And certainly I blame those painters who by wishing to appear copious, and because they do not wish that any void should remain, for this reason do not follow any regular composition, but disperse the whole confusedly and dissolutely; from whence it appears that the history does not treat of one action only, but makes a tumult; and therefore he who principally wishes dignity in his history, should study unity. So that as few words carry majesty in a prince, provided his will and commandments be understood, thus in History, a small number of bodies are sufficient to convey dignity, and if varied to produce Grace. I hate unity in History, nevertheless I do not praise more copiousness, which is far from dignity. Certainly in History, that pleases me much, which I see observed by the comic and tragic poets, who represent the fable with as few personages as possible."

C H A P. VIII.

CONCLUSION.

I DESIRE not to be interpreted sinistrouſly, but with due diſcretion, upon the judgment which I have formed on theſe three great men. When I have ſaid of them reſpectively that they did not poſſeſs this or that part, it ought to be underſtood in compariſon with the other parts of which they were in full poſſeſſion; or rather in proportion to others of theirs which abounded in ſuch parts.

In the ſame ſenſe ought to be underſtood the ſilence which I obſerve on the Beauties of many other great men, and the little eſteem with which I appear to ſpeak of them. Such is certainly not my intention; and ſuch like expreſſions ſerve me only to make my readers comprehend the difference there is in Genius's, although each may be beautiful in their kind. Every one knows well that no human operation is ſo egregious, that it cannot be carried to a higher degree. I conduct my readers to the cleareſt ſource that any painter can have taſted; its waters are the moſt pure and limpid, but this does not hinder that the quantity which ſcatters from its fall, and is gathered in vales, ſhould not be equally good to quench the thirſt. When I ſay that all the Painters after theſe

three have only possessed separate parts of their respective perfections, I do not mean by that to depreciate the one, but only to praise and exalt in the highest degree the merits of the others. In the same manner when I criticise the colouring and harmony of Raphael, I do not mean that it is properly bad, but that it is not in comparison with that of Correggio and Titian; since the same Raphael would be also in these parts sufficiently beautiful when compared to Michael Angelo, Giulio Romano, or even with Caracci. As is also Correggio in design and drapery, because when compared with Tintoretto in the one, or with Rubens or Giordano in the other, he will always remain excellent. And lastly the clare obscure of Titian is poor only when compared to that of Correggio, but becomes great when compared to that of others; and precisely for that are these three the greatest masters; since they were great in all parts, and in some excellent, and incomparable. They had different tastes, because they chose different objects. Raphael had the Taste of Expression, Correggio that of Pleasing, and Titian that of Truth: each made his choice. As these three Painters generally sought Truth; they have very often met, because the whole, as well in expression as in pleasing, is found in Nature, and they form respectively a different taste, only, because they do not mix, as nature does, every thing together; but each chose his particular part from the whole. Then, when by means of imitating nature, they sometimes found one part

respectively proper to another, without being contrary to the principal object, they formed it beautiful although it was not their peculiar part. From whence it comes that Raphael has sometimes painted as pleasing as Correggio, and with as much truth as Titian. Correggio sometimes almost as well as Raphael, and as true as Titian; and by turns Titian has designed like Raphael and pleased like Correggio. This being therefore in the works of all the three an event rather rare, I have thought it well to determine their Taste in conformity to their principal parts,

OBSERVATIONS

OF THE CHEVALIER

DON JOSEPH NICHOLAS D'AZARA

ON

THE TREATISE UPON BEAUTY

BY

ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES.

OBSERVATIONS



THE TREATISE UPON BEAUTY

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OBSERVATIONS

THE TREATISE UPON BEAUTY

ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES.

MENGES composed this Treatise before he went to Spain, and this was his first literary production, which was printed in German, the language in which it was written; and since Beauty was his favourite object through life, he continued to meditate upon it always, as we shall see by his following works.

In theory and in practice no one has ever known how to discern and to express Beauty better than Menges, but in the theory he had adopted the opinions of the Platonians upon the origin of that sublime quality, persuaded by the metaphysics of his friend Winkelman. My ideas have always been very different from those of these two friends, and I have thought of ex-

pressing them apart, so that the Reader, confronting the different opinions, can conceive better the object of which we treat. It neither adds or takes from Beauty to discourse differently upon its origin: this does not take from it that which it really is.

To form these my observations I have always profited of the works of Mengs, and what I have drawn from his conversation during many years of the most intimate and intrinsic friendship, for which reason I protest ingenuously, that whatever might be found valuable in these discourses, is all from Mengs; and the worthless parts will be assuredly mine.

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

CHAP. I.

OF THE VARIOUS OPINIONS UPON BEAUTY.

AN infinite number of people have written upon Beauty, and yet I believe we are very far from knowing what it really is. Plato who treats largely upon it, gives it but little explanation, and his Dialogue *Hippias* designed to explain what beauty is, appears rather to have been written to prove what it is not. In other places he inclines to give a real existence to that quality, as he gives generally to all his ideas. The Graces, the Muses, and all the train of Grecian poetry have the same origin and the same existence. The system of the same Plato is still more ingenious as marked by Menges, which is, that our souls had their being before they were united to the body, and that then they had known all things: that matter had absorbed that science; and that when we learn, we only remember that which we knew in our first state: and since we then knew positive Beauty, we now remember it when it is revised in ma-

terial objects. Pity that a system so ingenious be not true !

Saint Austin who was so Platonic, was said to be the author of a treatise upon Beauty which is lost. One discovers, notwithstanding, by what he has said in other works, that he believed it a correspondence of parts with the whole to form a unity. OMNIS PORRO PULCHRITUDINIS FORMA UNITAS EST. Those who are initiated in the mystery of numbers, will understand perhaps what this signifies.

Wolf and the Leibnitians, who have not always known how to dream with the charms of the Platonians, say, that the beautiful is all that which pleases, and that which displeases is ugly. One cannot confound more grossly the cause with the effect, than by confounding the beautiful with the pleasing.

Others pretend, that Beauty consists in VARIETY, UNITY, ORDER and PROPORTION. This is to pretend to explain one abstracted thing by another still more so; for since Beauty is difficult to comprehend, not less so, is REGULARITY, ORDER, &c.

The system of Hutchinson and of his followers, who have imagined an internal sentiment, by which they believe we discover Beauty as the eye discovers colours, appears to me the poorest, and the least ingenious system of the whole. It resembles the research of those little poets, who not knowing how to raise naturally the intricacies of a Tragedy, have recourse to miracle. According to the rules of these philosophers, it is

necessary to create as many internal sentiments as there are abstracted ideas which enter into the brain. Virtue, Justice, Order, &c. have their particular organs, by which they are introduced into the soul the same as Beauty.

The essay on Beauty by Father Andrew the Jesuit, who the celebrated Diderot found so just, has not, in my opinion, explained Beauty better than others. He divides it and subdivides it; and lastly says nothing more, than that its different classes consist in **REGULARITY, ORDER, PROPORTION, &c.** all which is in substance to explain the obscure by what is more obscure. If the Father ANDRES will define **ORDER** as a **BEAUTIFUL THING**, he will have the same reason to define Beauty as an **ORDINATE THING**.

The above cited Mr. Diderot after having dealt out many systems upon Beauty, proposes finally his own; but I fear that he will become a wreck upon the same shore which he has himself pointed out. Were I to entertain myself in analyzing his ideas, I should be diverted uselessly from my subject: It will be sufficient therefore to give a glance to the result of all his system; which is the following: "Beautiful to me, is
 " all that which contains in itself any thing, to
 " excite in my mind the idea of relation, and
 " with relation to me, all that which excites
 " this idea." I leave the reader to judge what sublimity is to be found in this definition.

In a little work which a few years ago was published at Rome, dedicated to Menges, the origin of Beauty is attributed to self-love: but

in this manner one only reverses the idea; because Beauty is a quality inherent to a beautiful object, and never to the person who receives the impression.

If Beauty be defineable, no one in my opinion could have approached it nearer than Cicero; but the simplicity of his expression will not, perhaps, have met the taste of those who wish to subtilize every thing. The Beauty of the body, says this great man, consists in an exact proportion of members, united to a soft colouring. *ET UT CORPORIS EST QUAEDAM AP-
TA FIGURA MEMBRORUM CUM COLORIS QUA-
DAM SUAVITATE, EAQUE DICITUR PULCHRITU-
DO; SIC IN ANIMO OPINIONUM JUDICIORUMQUE
ACQUABILITAS, ET CONSTANTIA, CUM FIR-
MITATE QUADAM ET STABILITATE.
PULCHRITUDO VACATUR.* Cic. 4. Tuse.

There is scarce an author who has treated upon this subject, that has not had a particular system. It would be a loss of time to wish to run over the whole. It will perhaps be sufficient to give an idea of the diversity of their opinions; and it is likewise the time to give mine upon that subject; but I shall confine myself only to the Beauties relative to the art of drawing.

Mengs in his youth believed Beauty of true and real existence, and thought to be able to define it; but he knew not then the difficulty, and contented himself afterwards by giving some ideas of its effects. I shall explain in the mean time, that which I believe will be able to give some probability of a subject so difficult.

C H A P. II.

OF THE MANNER BY WHICH ONE MAY CONCEIVE WHAT IS BEAUTY.

WHEN we behold a body which answers all its functions perfectly, according to the end for which it has been created, we call it a sound body. Making the idea general, we call HEALTH the state of that body. The word HEALTH cannot express more than an abstracted idea that the mind is formed of the body which we find in that state. To give it any other existence, is to run into Platonianism, which places all the world within our ideas, of which contagion one cannot entirely free Menges. With the same analogy we will say then, that Beauty is an abstracted idea; it is the idea of the state of things which contain certain qualities, and which, as will be further explained make them beautiful; so that it has no existence beyond the reach of our capacity.

C H A P. III.

OF THAT WHICH CONSTITUTES THE BEAUTY OF THINGS.

THE union of that which is perfect and pleasing remains evident, and it is that without doubt which renders things beautiful. That is perfect to mankind in which nothing appears to be deficient or superfluous; and pleasing is that which makes a moderate impression upon our minds. The ignorant can judge of the material impression which they receive, through the organs of the sight; but the perfect is to be judged alone by the intelligent, that is, by those who have observed minutely the property and quality of things which they have compared and reflected within themselves; from whence, disposing of the deficient and the superfluous according to their destiny, arises their perfection. He only is a judge of Beauty who has had much experience, and is of approved understanding; so one may affirm for certainty, that the choice or judgment of Beauty is always according to the understanding of the artist or observer.

The opposite to Beauty is ugliness, which consists in imperfection and unpleasantness, and we judge proportionably of the one after the same manner as the other.

C H A P. IV.

OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE PLEASING.

THE pleasing is not in its nature beautiful, although the beautiful is always pleasing. That which pleases me is not always pleasing to every one; nor even to the same person at different times; and this arises from Taste being an effect which the senses receive and not the reason; nor is there a thing so imperfect as not to please some one.

THERE IS NO DISPUTING UPON TASTE is the general axiom. If by that we understand enjoying the flavour of a thing effectively, the proposition is good; but if to the contrary is meant that every Taste is good, nothing is more false.

A lady who eats chalk, earth, or any other similar matter, has without doubt her Taste, although a depraved one. Monsieur de la Motte, who was better pleased with the scratches of the new bridge, of Paris, than by the Paintings of Raphael, had a Taste though truly bestial.

He who says, that one thing pleases him more than another, is not obliged to adduce his reasons, but if he supports, that one thing is more beautiful than another, he is obliged to say why it is so.

There might be some whom the verses of Lucan please more than those of Virgil, and such will not be considered ridiculous; but if they say that the first are more beautiful than the second, every one will ask them the reason. Every day we see people who like one colour better than another, and no one opposes their Taste; but if they say that green is more beautiful than blue, they will pass for fools unless they adduce some cause. If a woman who has for instance the whiskers and form of a man, finds any one who is pleased with her person, few people would wish to contradict his extravagant taste; but if he pretends to persuade that such a visage is beautiful, every one undoubtedly will laugh at him. This sufficiently shows that to understand and judge of Beauty, it is necessary to have the union of sense and reason; but for Taste the sense is alone sufficient. The Taste of one is independent of that of others; but there are different Tastes; such as the good, the bad, the ridiculous and the extravagant.

Our customs and ignorance are such, that we do not comprehend in the least, in what consisted the enthusiasm with which the Grecians abandoned themselves to the transports of Beauty. Among them, this was a quality of an estimation so extraordinary, that they held it for divine; and for that reason, in the works of the Arts they sacrificed to it all which remained; thus, that in the expression also of the greatest passions, they were very attentive not to prejudice Beauty. Virgil represents Laocoon in mad.

ness, roaring like a fierce Bull mortally wounded; but Agefander knew how to express all sorrow without offending Beauty.

Innumerable examples may be adduced to show in what degree Beauty was held by that delicate nation; but it is sufficient to know, that even from the earliest times, one finds that beautiful persons assembled in Elis to claim this prerogative, and that there were judges appointed to distribute premiums to those who had most Beauty. At Sparta, Nafus, and in other places they celebrated likewise the same meetings.

The pretenders had to expose their beauties before Painters and Sculptors, who were competent judges of the matter; so that these had the best opportunities of examining the most beautiful bodies. Anacreon says, that nature having exhausted all her treasure in the formation of man and the other animals, by giving them robustness, ingenuity, celerity, and all the other prevailing qualities, nothing was left to give to woman except their beauty, which values and prevails more than all that which she had bestowed on the rest.

In short, the delicacy of these people arrived to figure to themselves, that the soul which inhabits a beautiful body departs from it with greater reluctance than that which inhabits a brutal form, and that it leaves it by degrees as if departing from a sweet and pleasing dream.*

The idea which they had of natural beauty

* PHILOSTRAT. ICON. lib. I. cap. 4.

was nevertheless very different from that which we have, since it consisted in the perfection and proportion of the members, in the colouring, and certain repose, and in an air of majesty which hid as much as was possible the imperfections of humanity, advancing it to the Divinity. We, to the contrary, esteem that beautiful which nearest approaches humanity and its necessity. Forms without symmetry, members without proportion, deportment without nobility, and other such irregularities with us can constitute beauty, if there be a good complexion, lively eyes, and a shape which is called elegant; and if the whole together has much gesture and much expression, but of that which denotes and provokes desire. We are all matter and motion, the Greeks were all pensiveness and repose.

CHAP. V.
OF TASTE IN PAINTING.

THE word Taste in Painting is used metaphorically; and is introduced by comparison of the taste of the palate which is one of our senses; Flavour is the impression which that sense receives; and according as it is pleasant or unplea-

sant, strong or weak, the mind judges it to be either good or bad.

The Arts serve partly our senses, and partly our reason. The senses receive their impression, the understanding distinguishes it, and the reason judges it. In Painting, the sense of the sight may be compared to the taste of the palate, and the visible objects to flavours.

It will be then said, that a person has not taste in painting when his sight and reason are not capable of receiving and of judging competently of visible objects; as we say a person has not the taste of the palate if he does not know how to distinguish one flavour from another, and if all flavours are indifferent to him. A man of good taste in painting is him who has so much intelligence in the art as to know how to distinguish immediately if a thing be good or bad when it is so effectively and according to reason. A man therefore is of bad taste, who bad and unreasonable things please more than good ones.

In the same manner we say, that a Painter has bad taste if among the objects of nature he generally makes choice of the bad for his art; and to the contrary, he will be of good taste who makes choice of the best; and he who does not know how to distinguish the good from the bad, but only imitates the objects which present themselves to him, will be a Painter deprived of every taste; and this is the most numerous class. And since that taste of which we speak, is the produce of the genius and understanding

of the artist, it follows that he who has a good taste, has good judgment, and he who has a bad one, has a weak mind, and he who has no taste of any sort is a stupid sot. The same may be applied to the amateurs who are used to judge of paintings, and of every part of the art.

Continuing the same parallel of comparing material Taste with the Taste of the Arts, it is necessary to observe, that in the last as well as in the first, there are things which have much or little flavour, and some that have none; in the same manner in Nature are to be found things which make great impression upon the sight, and some which make little, and others which we distinguish only confusedly. So that therefore since to please the sensual Taste many things unite in order to rectify and improve the flavour; the judicious Painter may also unite those objects which best improve, in order to produce a good Taste, and a pleasing sensation to the sight,

C H A P. VI.

*OF THE REASON BY WHICH BEAUTY DELIGHTS
IN THE ARTS, AND OF WHAT SPECIE IS THAT
DELIGHT.*

SOME people have believed, that the Taste which Painting produces arises from illusion, that is, from those errors in which they suppose we are fallen when we see a Painting, imagining that we really see the thing which it represents. In the same manner they add, that we weep and laugh at a Tragedy and Comedy, because we are truly persuaded that the cases are present which are therein represented. From whence they deduce that in Painting, whatever is most perfect in the imitation, will also be the most beautiful.

These arguments are false in their principals and in their consequences. No one who has the least spark of judgment will suppose, even for an instant, that the thing is true which he sees represented in a Painting. I say more, that if this were possible, the major part of Paintings would have an effect totally different from what they have. How can a person of delicate fibres and of a sensible heart, see with delight the cruelties which brutal soldiers exercise upon so many bodies of innocent children? and a de-

licate woman who faints at the sight of a spider or a mouse, how can she be delighted and sleep sweetly having at her bolster a monstrous dragon which is going to swallow up the beautiful Andromeda? It is because there does not subsist that pretended illusion by which paintings are generally said to please; to which we may add that it is not at first sight an excellent painting most pleases, but it is when we have examined it with reflection and deliberation.

That imitation therefore is the more beautiful the more it is perfect, is another error which is inferred from the first. For what has imitation to do with beauty? That has its merit apart; for if the original be not beautiful, certainly the copy will not be less so the more it resembles it. Beauty consisting therefore, as it is proved, in the union of the perfect with that which is pleasing, nothing which has not this quality can ever be beautiful. Almost all the paintings of the Flemish school are perfect imitations of things natural; nevertheless, no one who has a little criterion will know how to find in them true Beauty. They are certainly beautiful imitations for those who stop at the material part of things and go no further; and here one might apply the sentence of Quintilian; *ADIO IN ILLIS QUOQUE EST ALIQUA VITIOSA IMITATIO; QUORUM ARS OMNIS CONSTAT IMITATIONE.*

In what then consists Taste produced from true Beauty? This is a complicated question, which requires a discussion rather extended; but I hope to be able to elucidate it if the reader will

have patience, and will deign for a moment to reflect within himself.

Thought is an essential thing to our soul; that is, to employ it in thinking, since the genius cannot have any other occupation. Exercising that faculty, it finds its satisfaction, and for that reason naturally researches objects to occupy it, but without disturbance; and it is this which is called *CURIOSITY*. When one suspends that exercise, or when it is carried to excess, or when in any respect we are obliged to think of things which do not please us, then follows that fatigue which is called *TIRESOMENESS* and the principal torment of the human heart. Nothing is so unpleasant to the soul as this sensation, and there is nothing it would not undertake to free itself from it. Those things which we call *AMUSEMENTS*, such as Plays, Poetry, Music, Painting, and infinite other things which foment and conserve society, have no other origin than the horror of *TIRESOMENESS*; and for that reason every one industriously occupies his genius, in the most pleasant manner he can. The soul however cannot occupy itself, but in two different ways. The one is receiving by the senses the impressions of external objects; and the other of reflecting, meditating and combining the ideas furnished by the memory. This last means is too laborious, and those souls are very rare who know how to live only in peaceable enjoyment found within themselves.

The most common means, and that which generally most pleases, is to partake of the impres-

sions of objects by means of the senses. These impressions are pleasing or displeasing from two motives. The first consists in agitating more or less the fibres of the organs, and the other in the ideas which they produce: of this however I shall not treat at present. A too lively colour, or a very powerful sound, vibrates too much the nerves of the eyes and ears, and occasions unpleasant sensations; from whence it is necessary that the commotion be moderate, and that it does not agitate the nerves more than that which their nature requires. If it be not capable of causing in them sufficient emotion, then there is no sensation; at least the soul does not distinguish it; it feels only a certain confusion incapable either of beauty, or ugliness.

Since then that the moderate sensations are those which most pleasingly occupy the soul, it follows naturally, that those objects which best produce that effect will be the most pleasing; and if to this be added a certain connection which passes between some objects and the sensations, to produce clearly and with facility correspondent ideas, it will be called EVIDENCE; and this is that which most satisfies our souls, because it knows how to produce pleasing sensations without being fatiguing in communicating the ideas; and fatigue is more molestation to the mind than the body.

Beauty, then, consisting in perfection and in pleasing, the delight which results from it will

be proved by the softness of the sensation, and by the evidence of its perfection.

If a beautiful object possesses besides that some quality of what is called attraction, sympathy, or such like, (which is not my object at present to explain) how does it happen then that to men and women, Beauty, besides the aforesaid general effect, astonishes the soul with joy, which arises as without itself and produces that agitation and transport which is called LOVE?

The sight of the same beauty in painting, makes an impression more moderate; because it does not go accompanied by any of the aforesaid qualities; for which reason it effects the senses with sweet commotion, and occupies the understanding without occasioning any perturbation.

C H A P. VII.

OF THOSE THINGS A PAINTER REQUIRES IN THE CHOICE OF BEAUTY.

THE thing most necessary to a Painter is, to be endowed with a delicate fibre, a very susceptible heart, and with an understanding unprejudiced; because without the first, Beauty will make no impression; without the second, there will be no ardour; and on failure of the third,

he will take one thing for another. He who seeks to make Beauty comprehensible, ought to begin by comprehending it well, and feeling it first himself.

I have already said, nor shall I tire in repeating it, that in no imitation, as a simple imitation, is Beauty, if the object imitated be not beautiful. Therefore all the finesse of the Art consists, as Mengs has said, in the knowledge of choosing well, by imitating the beautiful and necessary parts, and leaving aside the superfluous and minute. Guercino, Caravaggio Valasquez, and infinite other painters, *SERVUM PECUS*, imitate very well the objects, by giving them such force and relief that they appear real; but they want the art of a good choice, for which reason one seeks not Beauty in their works, and much less Grace, which is the same Beauty, rendered more delicate and more amiable. Their works make a strong impression upon the senses, but none upon the mind, which leaves them as it found them.

Among all the objects of the universe, none is for man so susceptible of Beauty as man himself, because there is nothing which he knows and loves so well. What then are the things which make men beautiful? I believe it to be the evident appearance of his good qualities, his strength, health, and moderation; and in women, health, moderation, and modesty. One recognizes this quality by the different appearances. Health by its colour; strength by the robustness of the members; moderation by the

repose of the attitudes, and by the simplicity of the form; and lastly in women one discovers modesty by the simplicity of the posture, aided by a form more graceful and delicate than that of man.

When an artist arrives to express all that which is necessary, with propriety, and in a manner the least complicated, and leaving aside all the superfluous and insignificant, and that which is improper and common, he may be sure if he has not erred in other essential parts of the composition and execution, of having attained Beauty.

C H A P. VIII.

OF THOSE THINGS WHICH MOST DESTROY BEAUTY; AND WHY THEY DESTROY IT.

WE have already seen that Beauty is diametrically opposite to ugliness, which consists in imperfection, and in displeasingness to the senses. There are moreover some things which without being directly opposite to beauty, destroy it, or at least confound it. These are superfluities, and minutiae.

The superfluous is one of the many things which, without being ugly, contributes to ugly.

ness. By the superfluous in painting is understood all that which serves not, and without which one has a clear and distinct idea of perfection. In a painting, for example, whose action is represented in some edifice, it is not necessary to display all the furniture, or to express the Architecture with the same exactness as the principal figures, or to introduce more actors, or more things than those which are necessary for the action; because otherwise one renders it more difficult to comprehend; and the mind must by that employ more attention and of course more fatigue. Numberless painters fall into that error by bestowing more care on the accessory, than on the principal parts; and one might say of them what Apelles said to him who asked his opinion of a painting he had done of Helena, SINCE THOU HAST NOT KNOWN HOW TO MAKE IT BEAUTIFUL, THOU HAST AT LEAST MADE IT SPLENDID.

Minuteness then is the true shore on which the vulgar painters become a wreck. The minute parts of things are not comprehensible to our senses; for which reason they ought not to be expressed. A painter who distinguishes almost microscopically, all the pores of the skin, and all the hairs of the head and beard, renders himself laughable, and worthy of the gothic ages: he will be the best imitator, and will also find admirers who will praise him, but reason will condemn him, because this excessive exactness in the minutiae distracts the attention of the observer, and destroys every pleasing idea by

occasioning fatigue to the mind instead of delight.

A similar defect has already been quoted from Horace, attributing it to a want of judgment in the artists, who express with the greatest accuracy the nails or the hair, but know not how to combine well the parts most essential: TOTUM COMPOSERE NESCIET.

The reasons by which the minute parts in painting and in other things fatigue the attention, and tire instead of pleasing, and of consequence cannot convey any idea of Beauty, arises from the mechanism of the eye: of which I shall give a short idea.

We are obliged to correct three errors in every act of viewing a thing. The first is, that we see nothing where it is, nor out of ourselves; the second is that all objects present themselves invertedly, appearing at the right that which is at the left, and below that which is above. The third is, that we see objects double, notwithstanding the mind judges that we see things as they are, right and simple. The sense of feeling is that which teaches this truth; and it is certain that every one learns to see, as well as he learns to read or write. The size of an object also is judged by the reflection which is produced by the same sense of feeling; and as every idea of size is relative, according to the angle which the object forms in the eye, and which feeling has taught to be greater or less than another, thus rectifying itself still more it

shews us how to distinguish the size according to the distance. Every eye is as a mirror, and the images of things represent themselves in the the retina after the same manner as in a crystal, that is, within itself and not where the objects are.

Feeling teaches us that these objects are truly external, and by force of renewing observations, the mind acquires the habit of judging properly of the true place of things.*

* I am not entirely ignorant of other systems contrary to the above theory of vision, written, perhaps, for spirit of singularity or contradiction, and for that reason I do not give myself the trouble to confute them. I shall only mention that of the Abbé Condillac, because his name could give weight to his opinion, and also authorise an error. This author gives his treatise of *ANIMALS* with a view of darkening, if he could, the glory of the illustrious Mons. de Buffon, and with only metaphysics undertakes to attack a man armed with all the points of mathematics, physic, natural history, philosophy, and eloquence.

He sustains that we do not see objects either double or inverted, because no images are depicted in the retina, it not being possible to paint images where no colour is given. He says, that in the retina, is caused only one perturbation, and that that perturbation is not colour, but may be an occasional cause of the modification of the mind; and when also the images are depicted in the retina, either double or inverted, one might from thence conclude that the mind proves the sensations and the imaginations in the same manner.

These arguments are so weak, that nothing would be more easy than to confute them with evidence, if the opportunity of the place permitted it. Whosoever fixes the sight in an object, separating the eyes with force, sees it double, because then the mind loses the habit with which it generally partakes of the sensations. How could Condillac imagine that the retina could experience commotions without a contact? And from what other thing can this contact be produced but from light? Who could imagine that the author of an excellent treatise against systems, should descend to one of the most discredited and perilous of all, which is that of the *OCCASIONAL CAUSES* of a good man, by Malebranche!

The small aperture of the pupil is by which enter all the rays of light which reflect the object; and if the object be greater than that aperture the rays cannot enter without crossing; it is therefore necessary that those which come from below be represented in the superior part of the retina, and that those which come from above be imprinted in the base. Feeling remedies also that inconvenience, by teaching the true situation of objects; so that although we see objects double and inverted, we imagine notwithstanding that we see them really simple and direct, and we persuade ourselves that this sensation, which is a judgment of the mind instructed by feeling, is a real apprehension produced by the sight.

All this is so clear, that there is no occasion of other proofs. Upon that therefore I form my system, with regard to the pain which objects too diminutive occasion the sight. Every large object of the aperture of the pupil is represented as inverted in the retina, and the mind, notwithstanding, believes it direct or straight. The habit contracted of judging thus, cannot change, without another habit equally constant to the contrary, which to adult persons would cost much time and fatigue. Suppose therefore that an object be smaller than the said aperture of the pupil, it ought necessary to follow that its images will enter there direct, because the lines which form the rays of light do not intersect in the entrance; and the mind then finds itself deluded, if it judges according

to the method taught by feeling, and will be found in contradiction with itself; for which reason, to form a true idea of the situation of that object, it will be constrained to make new reflections. This, therefore, cannot follow without a painful effort, because we cannot divest ourselves of a constant habit without much fatigue and attention.

In this then, consists all the mechanism of that which the sight suffers from objects very minute. The measure of the size which an object ought to have to enter direct or inverted into the eye, depends upon the size of the aperture of the pupil; but I leave this point to be discussed by those who treat of optics; and also shall omit to examine why children have the said aperture less than grown persons.

C H A P. IX.

OF CLARE OBSCURE.

HE who does not know what Clare Obscure is, (and few Painters there are who know it) believe it to be white and black, because generally the Clare is painted with white, and the Obscure with black; the one resembling light, and the other shade. But the thing is not thus.

Clare. Obscure does not consist in the colours, but in the art of using them, and of distributing intelligently the light and shade.

A surface which is not perfectly smooth and plain, reflects from every point the rays of light with different angles, because the property of those rays is to reflect in a manner that the angles of emersion may be always equal to those of digression; and since in an unequal surface each point is in a different elevation, it ought of course to form a different angle. Feeling has likewise rectified this sensation, as well as the other before mentioned, from whence the mind judges that to be elevated which reflects the light in a certain manner; that is, with a certain angle; and thus we have the idea of rotundity, and of the relief of things.

The parts most elevated reflect the rays of light in a manner different from the plain and convex, so that they appear more illuminated; and since each angle differs very little from that which is next to it, one ought to pass by an imperceptible gradation from the one to the other; from whence if one passes rapidly from a large one to a small one, it will represent the thing as if it were there intercepted or cut off, and the Clare Obscure will remain destroyed. The Art therefore consists in distributing the colours in a manner that they may reflect the light according to that effect which the taste and wisdom of the Painter prescribe that they ought to have in a determinate place, without confounding the bright, and smooth, with the raised, although

both these reflect the greatest quantity of light; but since they are very different, they ought to be expressed in a different manner.

One ought likewise to observe, that the rays of light are not all of an equal power; because each colour is of a different intensity from whence one ought to study the colour which composes the mass, to give the correspondent tone its force.

Practice will be able to teach the Artist some rules, but without a good theory, he will always work in the dark, nor will ever produce any thing truly beautiful.

The Painters whom I call NATURALISTS; that is to say, followers of mere practice or RECEIPT, or in a word, the ignorant, pretend to work with the highest perfection when they imitate purely the accidents of light, taking it from one part, and copying all the Clear and obscure in such a manner, that they represent truth; this is as a fluid which runs and illuminates all the parts it meets in a straight line, leaving Obscure all the rest. By this rule they make the illuminated parts too clear, and the others too obscure; acquiring in truth, the effect of giving a great relief to the parts where the light strikes, and they believe with that to have reached the summit of the Clear obscure. They reflect not however, that the gradations ought to be imperceptible, for the reason which is here adduced; and that all that which is superabundant, is ugly in place of being beautiful; because a passage so powerful, rapid, and

sudden from light to shade, offends the sight and reason.

Correggio and Menges knew the manner of avoiding the defect of the direction of light. They never took a great mass of light only to illuminate their works, but meditated, with great judgment, which were the parts in their compositions that merited to be most visible and raised; and they distributed the light upon each of these parts in a manner that it might illuminate all the Painting, not leaving any thing obscure; so that it appears that the sight passes into their figures, and there remains as if enchanted by the harmony which is formed by the contraposition of the various lights and shades. In such manner have these great men avoided that disagreeable effect which those occasion who take one light only, the same as if it entered through a window or a hole to illuminate their paintings.

These two great professors knew likewise, that light does not operate only in a direct manner, and that it does not touch any thing which it does not reflect, communicating part of its rays to the other immediate objects. From whence they have found the ingenious artifice to illuminate by reflection all those parts which could not take a direct light; and by this invention, they gave such clearness and harmony and such relief to their Paintings, that the eye is enchanted without knowing how or from whence the light comes.

To render more marvellous the works of these two Painters, concurs also their knowledge in the perspective aerea. The rays of light reflecting from the objects to the eye, are strong or weak according to their distance, their mass, or their intermediate **density**; for which reason, a near object ought to be expressed with more strength than a distant one, and the contours of the first, more distinct than those of the second. The lineary perspective, shows only the figures which in the eye form the objects as seen from a determinate point; and the aerea shows the degree of light which ought to be conveyed to the eye according to its distance. This has its fixed and mathematical rule, which depends not less upon the observations and nature of the light, than upon our senses; for which reason, that which is most complicated, is likewise most difficult: from this knowledge depends in great part the perfection of Painting.

CHAP. X.

OF BEAUTY IN COMPOSITION.

It would be presumption to give rules upon Composition after those which Mengs has given. I shall therefore say only a few words upon the

Beauty which enters into the whole of Composition, since till now has only been spoken of its parts.

We have seen that an object is beautiful in Painting, when it unites in itself the idea of perfection and of pleasing, and when the mind partakes of it with facility; and with the least application possible, that is, when the thing is evident: this evidence is the true source of Beauty.

Composition is only the Art of collecting the parts which compose a whole. The Painter as well as the Poet, is at liberty to invent, and ornament his subject as he likes, according as his judgment is good or bad; the one and the other therefore ought to be subject to verisimilitude, and the rules of Beauty.

The Poet has the advantage of being able to represent his action in various points, by means of narration; but the limits of the Painter are more confined. He is obliged to choose one point only of all the action, and in that to represent it precisely, and almost to concentrate it, without making account of that which precedes, or that which follows.

This point ought to be the most essential of the history, by which one comes to understand easily the whole; and as Menges says, the history ought to be explained by the Painting, and not the Painting by the history.

From thence it follows, that no Composition can be beautiful which does not express its intent with such evidence that a moderate understanding may comprehend it at first sight,

and without fatiguing its attention. Every time it is in want of an explanation, though ever so trifling, there is no longer Beauty. It is still worse if it be equivocal and susceptible of different interpretations; and worse still if the action be divided or represented successively. From all these errors one may cite practical examples; but I omit them, by reason that it may appear I do not wish to satirize any one. It is sufficient to bear in mind as an infallible rule, that without evidence there can be no Beauty, and that the least fatigue which it costs the mind to understand a Composition, destroys all the Beauty which might otherwise have been in the execution.

C H A P. XI.

OF EXPRESSION.

If one had to say all which relates to Expression in the Art, a voluminous work would not be sufficient to contain it. He who wishes to instruct himself fundamentally upon this important matter, should observe that which is found dispersed in the works of Cicero, Horace, Seneca, Pliny, Philostratus, and particularly in the judicious Quintilian; with the addition of

what Junius in his usual way has compiled, and digested in his treatise upon the Painting of the ancients. My intention is to treat of expression only as far as it contributes to Beauty.

By Expression, I mean the art of judiciously discovering the affections, by every sort of external signs. The union of the soul with the body is of such a Nature, that the emotion of the one, cannot happen without exciting a correspondent motion in the other. As the Painter ought therefore to represent his figures in action, he ought likewise to express in their appearance, and in every thing else, that situation and those emotions which the soul would produce in the body if it were really found in that state; but since among these emotions, enter more or less, some which are forced, and others which are natural, some noble, and others ordinary, and of a thousand other manners; it depends therefore upon the Taste of the Painter, to know how to choose those which produce Beauty; and likewise to know how to produce it with due precision.

He ought to know how to choose those lines which do not destroy Beauty. If the passion he wishes to express be very violent, and he copies materially some ordinary model, he will produce an affected and ordinary work, which agitating too much the fibres of the senses, will occasion pain in place of pleasure. Nevertheless, he ought not to lose for an instant the view of that grand principle in which consists all the mystery of the Art; which is, that the ob-

ject of Painting is to content the mind and the senses; by always pleasing them, and never fatiguing them.

When an artist has occasion, for example, to express the violent grief of a person, if he represents it with an open mouth, eyes inverted and convulsed, and with all his muscles and members contracted and altered, he will sometimes copy Nature faithfully; but he must not hope to find applause among those who are intelligent, because surely he will have produced an ugly work; because it is not possible to alter so much the members and muscles, and to conserve the beauty of their form.

The Laocoon with his children, is an example of the most mournful situation that humanity can suffer; and this his artizans knew how to vary and express in a manner, that at the same time the appearance expresses the most mournful idea, one does not see either gesture or convulsion to destroy the Beauty of the forms. In the father, one beholds a body pierced with the most dreadful torments, but of a mind forcible, and superior to his misfortunes as a rock which is beaten by the floods. His children, less robust, express greater impressions of grief, but the parts of the mouth and the eyes, which they turn to their father to ask for succour, and which is the correspondent expression of their estate and situation, express their state of mind, but without disfiguring the Beauty of their bodies.

The group of Niobe is another example of the noble manner with which the Grecians knew how to make visible the situations most violent, without altering or brutalizing the objects. The Deposition from the Cross by Menges, and especially his expiring Christ upon the same, two paintings belonging to his Catholic Majesty, are also Models of the most sublime expressions of that kind. One ought therefore to establish as a fundamental principle the practice of the Grecians, which was TO DO THE MOST WITH THE LEAST MEANS POSSIBLE.

The other emotions of the mind, which do not produce effects so visible, are more difficult to observe; because to discover their causes, it is necessary that the painter be a philosophical observer of the labyrinth of the human heart, and that he knows anatomically the play which each effect produces in the body: all which is not to be done without great talent and study. The Grecians possessed that art to such perfection that in their statues one scarcely discovers that they had thought of expression, and nevertheless the whole expresses that which they ought to express. They are in a repose which shows all the beauty without any alteration; and a soft and sweet motion of the mouth, the eyes, or the sole action expresses the effect, by enchanting the mind and senses.

Among the moderns (it is necessary to confess it) is introduced a sect of Painters and of DILETTANTI who have nothing for true expression except contortion, making with much

but very little effect. Idleness in thinking, and ignorance, are the sources of that depraved taste. The vulgar motions of a passionate person, who puts in violent contortion all his members; or the blood which runs in torrents from the wounded person; or the horridity of a dead corpse; excite very little talent or instruction: it is sufficient to have eyes and not to shut them. To discover the emotions of the soul, to surprise as one may say its hidden secrets, and to know how to express all that externally without altering the beauty of the form, requires great attention, and greater philosophy. Neither is all this sufficient to attain the end; it is necessary also to think with propriety, that is, of the character of the person; since a Hero or a Prince is not so passionate as a Russian, nor a Deity as a mortal being. And more, the Expression ought to be derived from Truth and not from Imitation; for as Mengs said, there is a great difference between a person truly agitated, and the Comedian who represents him; and Terence so many ages past had already discovered that difference.

..... EX ANIMO OMNIA,

UT FERT NATURA, FACIAS, ANDE INDUSTRIA.

In portraits we often behold a face which is not to be found in a whole nation together. Very rare is he who contents himself to portray or to be portrayed as God has made him. He is to be situated in a posture which is said to be *LIVELY* without knowing wherefore. The eyes, the mouth, the gesture, are to

be twisted or untwisted according to the idea or fantasy of his happy genius; either by shortening or twisting the body in a contrary sense, or by throwing indirectly the body and head, else by modelling it in attitudes of dancing; in fact all is done that can be to belie the portrait, and not to obtain the point proposed, because all that which alters the natural form, and wrests it from its natural repose, is ugly and unpleasing.

There is no good portrait or ancient statue (except those which require a forced posture) which has not the head inclined towards the breast. It appears that in general the Ancients thought that posture the most natural, to the end that their images should captivate the minds of the spectators by appearing as if they would wish to converse with them; and thus they avoided the odiousness, which arrogance produces, denoted by a straight neck, or the head thrown back.

Finally I conclude, not to be more diffuse, by advertising that Expression is not limited to mark the passions of the mind only in the face. Every particular member, posture, motion, drapery, landscape, architecture, trees, and lastly the light itself, the sky, and whatever enters into a painting is all susceptible of Expression, and all ought to contribute to Beauty.

C H A P. XII.

*OF THE GRAND, THE MIDDLE, AND THE
INFERIOR STYLE.*

WHEN we say in Painting that a style or figure is grand, one ought not to understand the grandeur of the size; the same with regard to the middling and inferior style; because the quality of a painting is not measured by its size. The grand or great style, as Mengs says, is when we make a choice of great parts, leaving aside mediocrity, and the inferior style.

Every thing in Nature is composed of some principal, and some minor parts, and thus gradually to infinity. Our sight cannot distinguish the first elements of things, nor can Painting propose to imitate it, much less to represent it by its colours. A human face, for example, is composed of the forehead, brows, eyes, nose, cheeks, mouth, chin, and beard. These are the great parts, but each of these contains many other minor parts, which also contain an infinity of others still less. If the Painter will content himself to express well the great parts which I have taken notice of, he will have a grand Style; if he depicts also the second, his style will be that of mediocrity; and if he pretends to intersect the last his style will be insignificant and ridiculous. However in a

gigantic figure, one might form a minute style, and in a small figure a grand style.

Since Painting represents only the appearance of things, as soon as it gives the idea of them in the manner most easy, and least confused, it has obtained its end, by giving the cognition of the object represented with possible evidence, and without fatiguing the attention, and for that reason the grand style is beautiful.

Some Painters of renown have formed a false idea of greatness, and are allured to investigate it by sentiments very tortuous and erroneous. Michael Angelo would have lost with his credit the Taste of his age, if Raphael had not opposed it with a Taste much more wise.

He never during his long life, executed a work of sculpture, or of Painting, or perhaps even of architecture with a view of pleasing, or of representing Beauty, which he knew only in order to make a pomp of his knowledge. In all his figures he sought the most violent attitudes, or those which appeared to him most convenient to make a vain show of his anatomical science of the muscles, and bones; and he delineated all that with the greatest force and violence, strongly doubting if the beholders would well understand them. He thought to have had a style of grandeur; instead of which it was the most insignificant, and perhaps the most vulgar and heavy. His contortions have been admired, and even adored by many, and they have called his style FIERY, TERRIBLE, and DIVINE. It may be whatever they like, but it certainly is not

grand or beautiful. Mad with the ambition of being thought learned, he never had any regard of pleasing or satisfying the mind with Beauty.

It will be sufficient to see his famous GIUDIZIO to be convinced of what I say, and to what a height might arrive the extravagance of a composition. Falconet, who cannot always be absurd, said the admired Moses appears rather a galley-slave, than an inspired legislator.

Dolce in his Dialogues, without comprehending the true cause, remarks, nevertheless, these defects of that celebrated professor; but for one who has the use of reason, he must have judged with his eyes closed, when he asserted, that Michael Angelo was all divine.

His works, notwithstanding merit to be studied, in order to learn the correction of drawing, and the skill of anatomy, always however with the remembrance, that these are only the means and never the end of Painting.*

* Some persons jealous of the reputation of Michael Angelo, more than that of any other author, and perhaps more than of their own, are scandalized by the severity of this judgment. To ease therefore their consciences, one could here cite similar judgments which great professors have pronounced upon the Artists called DIVINE.

In order not to be fatiguing, I shall content myself by quoting what the learned Mr. Fuessli, (who published in German at Zurich, the works of Mengs upon Beauty) says in a letter which is at the end of the second volume of those of Winkelman, and runs thus.

“Tous les artistes font de leurs saints des vie, illards sans doute
 “par ce qu'ils pensent que l'âge est nécessaire pour donner
 “la sainteté; et ce qu'ils ne peuvent donner de majesté et de
 “gravité, ils le remplacent par de rides et des longues barbes.
 “On en voit un exemple dans le Moïse de l'Eglise de S. Pierre
 “aux Liens du ciseau de Michel Ange qui a sacrifié la beauté à

“ la precision anatomique, et à sa passion favorite, le terrible
“ ou plutôt le gigantesque. On ne peut s'empêcher de rire
“ quand on lit le commencement de la description que le judicieux
“ Richardson donne de cette statue. COMME CETTE PIECE
“ EST TRÈS FAMEUSE, IL NE FAUT PAS DOUTER QU'
“ ELLE NE SOIT AUSSI TRÈS EXCELLENTE. S'il est vrai que
“ Michel Ange ait étudié le bras du fameux satyre de la ville Lo-
“ dovisi, qu'on regarde à tort comme antique, il est très probable
“ aussi qu'il a étudié de même la tête de ce satyre, pour en don-
“ ner le caractère à son Moïse. Car toutes deux comme Ri-
“ chardson le dit lui même, ressemblent à une tête de bouc. Il y
“ a sans doute dans l'ensemble de cette figure quelque chose de
“ monstrueusement grand, qu'on ne peut disputer à Michel Ange.
“ C'étoit une tempête qui a présagé les beaux-jours de Raphael.”

REFLECTIONS

OF

ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES

UPON THE THREE GREAT PAINTERS,

RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN.

AND UPON

THE ANCIENTS.

REFLECTIONS

OF

ANTHONY RAPHAELE



UPON THE THREE GREAT

RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN.

AND UPON

THE ANCIENT

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THE title of these reflections might induce some people to believe that they are a repetition of what Mengs has said in his Treatise upon Beauty; proposing there and here the parallel of the three great Painters, Raphael, Correggio, and Titian. Certainly the object is the same; but the Reader will find it filled with such novelty, extension, and learning as such great principles require, and will not lose his time by reading it. Mengs wrote it to substitute the said Treatise upon Beauty, when he thought to suppress the printing of it, as one may see in the letters of Winkleman.

The manuscript from which these works are taken, is a labyrinth full of repetitions, and deficient in many essential parts; and notwithstanding all the pains which have been taken to put it in order, and to elucidate it, it has not been possible to reduce it to an exact and regular method. One might have been able to put the whole together, and by that to take from it its greatest worth, which is the original style of the Author, who is here left to speak his own language, in order that he may become more instructive in spite of his repetitions, which otherwise consist of points of importance for Painters and Amateurs.

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Obscure and Colouring; and Titian was great
~~only in Colouring, and in imitation of Nature~~
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RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN,

AND UPON

THE ANCIENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

RAPHAEL is undoubtedly the first among the greatest Painters, not for being more rich than the others in possessing a greater quantity of perfect parts in his profession, but for having the quality most important; because Painting being composed of Design, Clare Obscure, Colouring, Imitation, Composition, and Invention; it is certain, that Raphael possessed the Art of Designing and Composition in a high degree, as well as sufficient invention: In the mean time, Correggio remained excellent in Clare

Obscure and Colouring; and Titian was great only in Colouring, and in imitation of Nature. From whence one may say, that Raphael was the most estimable, because he possessed the most necessary and noble parts of the Art. Correggio possessed the most amiable and enchanting: Titian contented himself with pure necessity, which is the simple imitation of Nature.

RAPHAEL, CORREGGIO, AND TITIAN.

AND

THE ANCIENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

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PART THE FIRST,

CHAP. I.

GENERAL RULES TO JUDGE OF THE MERIT OF PAINTERS.

TO know the merit of the professors of an Art or Science, it is necessary to know the fundamentals of the same Science or Art. Painting has different parts, as well general as particular. Some are so essential that without them no one can call himself a Painter; others render the professors more precious or more distinct, more common or more trivial.

The quality most necessary is the imitation of all things, which can be conceived and represented in a moment. The second consists in the ideal, that is, in the representation of things which have no original; from whence the Painter has to represent it according to the conception which he has of it in his mind, without its having passed by way of the senses,

In order to arrive to the first degree, which is nothing more than simple imitation, it is sufficient to have the sight exact, and not to be deceived in the object which one has to copy. For the ideal part it requires much talent, and great imagination.

This last part, when Painting first began, was not able to arrive to that point which it reached afterwards, for this simple reason, that the ideal part is the perfection of the Art, and no Art can be perfect in the beginning.

These two qualities which form, as one may say, two species of painting, comprehend even the most minute parts; which I shall explain by an example.

A Painter of the first kind, that is him who studies only what is merely necessary, will make a head or a hand to a beautiful figure, but will make it with all the little imperfections generally found in Nature; nor will he know how to choose the best among the good, to make a work which approaches to ideal perfection. To the contrary, a Painter of a high degree will take from Nature the beautiful only, avoiding the imperfect and defective; and will omit also the beautiful parts when they do not accord well one with another, such as a body fleshy and robust, with hands thin and meager; the full breast of a beautiful woman, with a neck lean and skinny, &c. Each of these parts may be beautiful by themselves, but produce a bad effect when united with others which do

not correspond, although Nature often makes such unions.

From whence I conclude, that the first will be only an able artizan, but the second ought to be a philosopher, and a profound connoisseur of natural things; and since one cannot arrive to the last degree without having passed the first, from this arises the superiority of the one to the other.

To arrive therefore to perfection in Painting, it is necessary first to accustom the sight to the greatest exactness; then to put in practice the rules of the Art, and of representing all things: these are the fundamentals. In the second place, it is necessary to accustom the sight to good objects, in order to separate them from the bad; to distinguish the beautiful from the good, and the best among the beautiful. The third requisite is to know the reasons by which one thing is more beautiful than another, and why it is after a certain manner, and not otherwise; nor can this be obtained without a good talent and judgment, nor without certain studies, which in some manner arise from without the limits of Painting, or at least are banished from the schools of our time; since we see that noble profession reduced almost to a mechanical trade, by inculcating continually that one may learn it by force of practice, the same as the shoemaker learns his apprentice to make shoes: thus by habit of making Paintings they pretend to become Painters.

I exhort the students of Painting always to consider it as a liberal Art composed equally of mechanism and of science, in order that they may thus know how vast are its limits. The great diversity which is observed in the merits of all Painters, depends upon the greater or less portion which each possesses of the two aforesaid qualities, and of the degree of their perfection. Those who have more mechanism than science, are low imitators of Nature, such as are the Dutch Painters. Those who limit themselves only to the ideal, will never produce more than sketches; nor can they finish any thing, because they want the mechanism so necessary to the accomplishment. I could adduce for example Pussin, as a proof of this inconvenience, and Raphael for the union of mechanism and science.

The ideal, nevertheless, is as much more noble than the mechanical part, as the soul is superior to the body. Necker, Gerarde, and Miers have carried imitation to an insurmountable degree. Raphael knew not the ideal as well as Pussin; but that part of it which he did possess, he knew better how to unite with imitation. In imitation Gerarde was superior to Raphael; but Raphael better combined nobleness with the ideal; by which upon the whole he has surpassed the two most excellent artists in the two extremes.

With these principles it is easy to judge of the merit of Painters, since between two equals, one in the imitation and the other in the ideal, it is

just to prefer the last to the first ; and if a third unites the two qualities he will be the most estimable of all, as he possesses the art intirely.

I have said that a Painter merely Ideal, will produce only sketches without conclusion ; now I adjoin if ever is to be found such a Painter, he will be very little estimable : he will be a painter of dreams. When I have said that Pussin made sketches of things, I intended to say, that he has exceeded in the Ideal, observing it even in the form of a hand or foot ; and that, absorbed in the idea, he left those parts without finishing and conducting them to their natural perfection ; but he was not intirely ignorant of imitation, and for that reason he is a Painter of great merit.

CH A P. II.

GENERAL EXAMINATIONS UPON RAPHAEL.

I HAVE already said, that the first and best Painter after the re-establishment of the Art, has been Raphael, because before him no other had possessed the parts either in quantity or in quality equal to him, and afterwards no one has appeared in comparison. My aim is now to observe by what means he has arrived to such eminence, and what one ought to do to imitate him.

Raphael was born at Urbino in the year 1483. His father was a Painter, in which he was fortunate, because a father naturally teaches his profession with more anxiousness and care to his son than to a stranger; from whence Raphael was assuredly educated in his art with the greatest attention. When he appeared to the world, no other maxim was observed in painting except that of imitation; and the best imitator was the best Painter. Since that quality could not be acquired without great diligence and exactness of sight, Raphael took the first rudiments from these good maxims, which are the most necessary to any good or middling genius; because the one at the least will arrive to obtain imitation, and the other will surpass it.

Little fatigue remained to Raphael in these institutions, as well from the perspicuity of his genius, as because each part alone is always more easy to learn, and especially imitation, than is that which manifests itself more to the senses.

His father, John Sanzio, put him to study under Peter Peruginus, to learn the practice of the Art, which in his house he had not the opportunity to exercise for want of works of consideration.

The disciple very soon equalled the master, because his fort consisted in the imitation of Nature, and Raphael had learnt that from his father; from whence he took from Peruginus only the practice of painting in fresco, in oil, and in

distemper; which cost him but very little trouble.

He went from thence to Florence, where the first things that he studied were the works of Masacci in the church of del Carmine, and here he acquired a little of the taste of antiquity, leaving aside the style of broken and short folds of his master. Yet, notwithstanding, he could not entirely get rid of that trifling taste which he had imbibed in his education; although he was now become a little more elegant.

On account of the death of his father, he had occasion to go to Urbino, and there hearing of the cartons of Michael Angelo, and of Leonardo da Vinci, done in order to be painted in fresco, he returned to Florence, and having seen those of Michael Angelo he did as Bees who extract honey even from bitter flowers, because Buonarroti was a remedy too violent for Raphael. That style served him, notwithstanding to correct his trite and trivial taste, and to abandon his mechanical manner; and since the great precision of the eye which he had acquired from his infancy, made him master of his pencil to execute with facility whatever he thought or desired, he was not exposed to the fear of an erring hand; as happens to many of us in this age, in which one studies more to design with masterly touches and quickness, than with truth and exactness: it was easy to him, I say, to change his style, and to imitate that of these professors.

The friendship which he then contracted with Father Bartholomy of Saint Mark, was very

useful to him in learning from him, to paint as well as Michael Angelo had designed. Notwithstanding, he liked not to follow him too near, in order not to quit the scrupulous exactness which he preferred always to every thing else. Nevertheless, he learnt to aggrandise much his taste, by painting with colours more strongly impasted, and in greater masses than he had done before that time. In this manner he left aside little pencils, and banished the grey from his tints. He no longer cut with his folds the form of the nudity which was under, or divided them with little black strokes; he conserved in the drapery the same clare obscure which the figures ought to have when they are made; in short he learnt to execute the good parts, which Father Bartholomy and the Masacci's had indicated.

Being returned to Urbino he soon made known his progress, and discovered his new taste in a painting of the Deposition of our Lord, painted in a chapel. He was invited on that account by his uncle Bramante to go to Rome, where he was commissioned to paint in the new apartment, called DI BORGIA, or DELLA SEG-NATURA. He there began (according to different writers) by the four circles of the cieling, in which he still conserved, as is very observable, much of the style of Father Bartholomy. This however pleased so much, that the Pontiff ordered the paintings of the other Painters who had painted upon the walls to be cancelled,

not being able to reign in competition with Raphael.

He began therefore to paint one of the walls, representing the meeting of the Doctors of the church, or as it is generally called, the painting of THEOLOGY, with the Trinity above, and with the Patriarchs, intermixed with other Saints and Angels. This is a most admirable painting, if one considers each part by itself; but it is well known, that Raphael found himself embarrassed by the great field which he had undertaken, and the laborious attention which it required; because the ardent desire of doing it well, made him fall into some debility, which happens alone to the most elevated genius's, from the desire of performing things extraordinary.

The time in which he lived, and the little experience of his age, which could not be more than twenty five years, made him renew the idea of Peruginus, from whence he drew the rays of light in gold relief, and there strung Angels and Cherubims, with other similar extravagances. One may, however, excuse Raphael in that, since it happens the same in our time; for we see amateurs who approve only of that which comes credited by the example of some painter of fame; from whence it is possible that the partizans of Peruginus would not have praised this painting, if they had not found it rich of gold. But every one sees that this is not a good excuse: however for me it is sufficient to show the way followed by Raphael in order to arrive to such greatness as he did.

All the parts of that painting are done with the highest attention; and one sees that he began by the right side, and terminated by the opposite. The parts which are towards the first side, one observes to be dry, painted therefore with diligence, and well impasted with colours; scarce any thing is retouched, and it is there one discovers the Taste of Father Bartholomy. One sees that all the parts are taken from Nature; that is, copied from designs done from Nature; but the more the work advances, the more one beholds the successive progress of his good style, and one discovers also, that surmounting every timidity he worked with more liberty.

In all the paintings which he did in this room, one sees the same track. The first things are of a timid pencil, but however very elaborate. Here one neither discovers the style, or the maxims of a man of consummate knowledge; because the contours are still of an indecisive character, and it appears that he was afraid of adding or taking from it. The folds are well finished; the eyes are beautiful, but marked with timidity: the whole appears more beautiful at a near view than at a distance.

To the contrary, the works of his last taste appear done with greater facility. Here one beholds some original traits, such as those which remain from the contours of the cartons: the drapery is less finished, but has more effect from afar off, because he knew that the little gradation which he first gave it, rendered it invisible, in being viewed from a distance; he therefore

advanced more the two extremes of the clare obscure; fixed with more boldness the colours of the contours; corrected himself in the timidity of adding and taking from parts, a defect which made him appear cold; he found that the little parts were the first to be lost in distance, and in the interposed air, and that on this account it was necessary to agrandize them in larger works; he abandoned the useless parts and learnt to distinguish the most or the least necessary; he observed that the bones ought to be attended to more than the folds of the skin, and that the tendons ought to be more visible than the flesh; that the muscles in action merit more attention than those which are inactive; that the force of the drapery does not consist in each separate fold, and that these folds, which one finds in the middle of some clear mass, ought not to be cut off by any obscure, nor be so precise as those which fall upon the joints; that in general one ought to observe in them the reflections of light, such as in a bunch of grapes in which those exposed to the greatest light reflect it in a manner which almost dissipates all obscurity.

Whoever would wish to see all the aforesaid rules and ratiocinations in the most perfect execution, has only to examine attentively the painting of the school of Athens, in which Raphael has put it in practice with wonderful skill.

Even at that time Raphael had not proposed more than to follow Michael Angelo,

and here he became stimulated by the extraordinary credit and exaggerated encomiums which every one bestowed on that professor; this led him from forming any other superior style, and made him lose the most precious time. But since he was endowed with an original talent, it was not possible that he could content himself with being a simple imitator. That which is natural to one, becomes artificial, and affected to another, and a copy always wants that fire and brilliancy which is to be found in an original. For this reason Raphael lost a part of his natural merit in wishing to imitate the hero of the Florentine school. The advice of his friends, who suffered him not to remain a copyist, and especially his natural genius and discernment, awakened him from that slumber, during which his reputation was abased; because the public held him as an imitator inferior to his model, such as in the paintings of the Conflagration of Borgo, and of the defeat of the Saracens, in which he was eager to approach more the style of Buonarroti.

Thus awaking he became afterwards more sprightly and cheerful, and as one who goes to an enterprise after sweet repose, he undertook the painting of the transfiguration, which the Cardinal, nephew of the Pope, wished to give to the King of France; and he executed it with the greatest ardour, because he knew that Michael Angelo wanted Father Sebastian del Piombo to oppose him with another painting of which Michael Angelo himself had done the design. Raphael was

glad of it, and said that Buonarroti did him by this a great favor, since he thought him worthy of competition with him and not with Father Sebastian.

In this painting Raphael is no more that free and ardent Painter which he was in the frescos of the Vatican; he does not expose himself to any peril: nothing is lopped off or added to truth: he chooses thus the beautiful, discovers a new degree of perfection, and opens the true road to the Art.

In Raphael alone is found the three styles of painting; since in his first works he was, like the inventors of the Art, a pure imitator of Nature, but without representing it with its true grace. In his second, which are those of the Vatican and particularly in the School of Athens, he reduced the mechanism of the art, and the imitation of truth to the rules of Beauty, expressing all with force and boldness, being capable of following whatever his talent dictated.

He remained thus for some time, being intoxicated by self love, and the praises which he received; and not being abetted by any competitors, he committed almost all his works to his disciples. Finally his ardent genius began to advance; and since that was not possible by the beaten path, he undertook another more secure, searching a more perfect nature than that which he had followed before. He sought more variety in the drapery, more beauty in the heads, and more nobleness in the style. He perfected his Clare obscure, by putting it

more in a mass; and notwithstanding he was a great master, he was newly reduced to become a disciple to perfection. His painting of the Transfiguration is a clear proof that he had acquired the highest idea of true beauty; since that work contains even more of it than all his anterior ones. The expression is there more noble and delicate; the clare obscure is better; the degradation is better understood, and lastly, the strokes are more fine and admirable, since one finds not any lines, or contours as in his antecedent works.

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PART THE SECOND.

OF THE PARTS OF PAINTING, AND OF THE PERFECTIONS AND DEFECTS OF RAPHAEL.

OF DESIGN.

RAPHAEL began with a Design dry and servile, although sufficiently correct. He then learned a superior style, yet never so perfect, and competent as that of the ancients of the first degree, because he had not on the whole that knowledge of true Beauty which the Greeks possessed. He was excellent in the characters of Philosophers, Apostles, and in other figures of that kind. His women are not sufficiently graceful, and he spoilt them by his convex turns, which render them in a certain manner trivial, and of a vulgar air; and when he wished to avoid that error, he fell into another, still worse, which was harshness.

He knew not Ideal Beauty, and for that reason was more excellent in Apostles and Philosophers, than in the divine figures; that is to say, his Design comprehended all the contours which one finds in Nature, and which he imitated in every thing he did. He studied the Antique principally in Bas-reliefs; and acquired a taste more Roman than Grecian. In his works one sees the most minute tracks of the Arch of Titus and of Constantius, with the bas-reliefs of that of Trajan. From thence he took the system of marking principally the joints and bones, and of maintaining the contour of the flesh more simple and easy. The aforesaid Bas-reliefs are not of the best taste of antiquity; yet they are beautiful for the symmetry, and the relation of one member with another. By this study Raphael understood the propriety of characters, and the relation of the members better than any other painter. He made the figures of the proportion of six heads only, and they appear as beautiful as if they were of eight; which depends solely upon the just maxims of proportion; although in general his are not so elegant as those of the Grecian Statues; nor are his joints so delicate as those of the Laocoon, Apollo, or the Gladiator.

One perceives also how much Raphael studied antiquity; and when this failed him, he soon failed also in the imitation; as one sees in his hands, which he made not beautiful, because he had not ancient models; very seldom finding statues which preserved it. He was also still less happy in the

hands of women, because nature offers but few beautiful; failing always in one of the extremes; either by being very fat, or very thin. I imagine that great man was habituated, almost always, to draw grown persons, because he never knew how to give to his children that morbidity, and fleshiness of a sucking babe, which nature requires. He painted his children as those of the ancients must have been; serious and reflective, and when he made any one for a model, one sees that he did not pretend to any thing more than the heads, without even giving them the least nobleness; because, no doubt, they were models of the children of poor people, and plebians; as one observes in the Child of the Virgin della Seggiola copied assuredly from nature; which although it is of a lively physiognomy, wants much of that nobleness and beauty to be able to compare with the great elegance of Titian. Nor is he as great, or as noble as the authors of the aforesaid statues, because he never believed that it was possible there could be any thing greater than the taste of Michael Angelo, who seeking to be always great was always vulgar, and extending by a convex line beyond the limits of nature, he lost the way to re-enter it again; and being fixed in his youthful brain that false idea of greatness, he maintained it through life, and was always overcharged. For this reason the works of Michael Angelo will always be much inferior to those of the Ancients of good

taste, because although they knew how to make a figure robust, and muscular, yet they never made it heavy. One sees an example in the Hercules of Glinçon which in spite of being so large, and of a form so majestic, one knows very well that it is a person as light and as active as a deer, and that it is the same who conquered the lion Nemeus, and sustained the world upon his shoulders. Michael Angelo could not with his style represent similar things, because his joints are a little stiff, and appear done only for the posture in which they are put. His fleshy parts are too full; of rotund form; and his muscles are of a mould and form always equal, which hides the motion of the figures. Lastly one does not see in his works any muscles in repose: the greatest error which he could have fallen into. He knew perfectly the situation of each muscle, but gave them not their true form. Neither did he understand the nature of the tendons, because he made them equal and fleshy from one extreme to the other, and the bones too round. Raphael partook of all those defects, without ever arriving in the theory of the muscles to the perfection of Michael Angelo: by which I conclude, that it is necessary to study Raphael in the characters which are natural to him, that is, in old persons, and in muscular complexions, because in the most delicate he is harsh, and in the most powerful he is a copyist of Michael Angelo.

Raphael imagined, and expressed wonderfully all human forms; and I believe if he had lived

in Greece when it was in its most flourishing state, and where he would have seen such beauties, he would have arrived to the most sublime degree, and would have equalled the most celebrated of Antiquity. He knew not what was ideal Beauty, as he confessed in a letter written to the Count Baldassare Castiglione, when he painted the Galatea in the house of Austin Ghigi, now called the FARNESINA. In this letter he says, he was necessitated to imagine the Beauty which he wished to paint, and for that reason he feared to make it inferior, because to produce Beauty it requires a Beautiful model. By that is inferred that he knew not how to profit himself of the ancient statues, since he sought all his beauties in nature, and confided in his good talent for finding it. I believe therefore one might deduce that Raphael was not much an imitator of the ancients; and if for his pleasure he ever imitated them, one might be convinced that they were the inferior ones and not those of the highest taste. He imitated them only in the general maxims, and in that part which one might call the practice or manner, but not in their beauty and perfection. He sought in Nature the beautiful things which he had discovered in the ancients of the second order, and with the same maxims he formed his taste. He was therefore excellent in the natural things which he found in the ancients, and those which he found not in them, he did not arrive to imagine.

That which I have said until now, refers only to the form, and not to invention, or expression, of which I shall proceed to treat hereafter.

CH A P. II.

OF THE CLARE OBSCURE OF RAPHAEL.

RAPHAEL understood well where, and how he ought to use the Clare obscure; but he possessed no other part than that which regards imitation, and knew nothing of Ideal. One sees however some traits of this Ideal in his works; but one likewise sees very clearly that they are produced by chance, and the vivacity of his natural taste, and not from the effect of method. The system held by Raphael in his paintings, has been to represent his history, and drapery as if all the figures were dressed in white. Upon that supposition he has distributed his first lights where he believed they ought to be, and decreasing from that even to the most distant part he continued diminishing; so that we see in the foreground of his paintings much white and yellow drapery. I think it was the maxim of Raphael and the Florentine School, to use very clear colours in the foreground of

Paintings, because I see that the Lombardians, and other good colourists, used always in that part pure colours, such as red, yellow, and blue; which are better adapted to approximate objects than light colours; because the whitish give always an effect of air to the colours, and dull their vivacity. Besides that, Raphael had another maxim also more erroneous, which was to give an equal light to the drapery, which from its nature ought to be of pure colours; that is, he would have made a vest blue; as in fact he did for the Apostle who is seated in the foreground of the Transfiguration, and has the Clare quite white, which is not possible with the shade and half-tint so strong as he has made them. And this is what I call raising the Clare to a white, or lowering it to a black. He observed the same rules in the obscure; beginning by giving the greatest force to the foreground, and decreasing it even till it met with the Clare. This method was much after his taste, because from the most relieved he advanced the objects more than by any other method, since the parts in advance are the most powerful; but this is against propriety and the effective truth of nature, because a white garment can never be in itself so obscure as Raphael has made it, who to follow this practice was obliged to neglect that of reflection, which contributes so much to clearness and grace.

The aforesaid practice of Raphael is less improper in a small painting than in a large one,

because in that there can be but little variety of Clare obscure, as the mass ought to be small in order to advance or throw off the drapery and figures; and by that same reason he found himself constrained to use little degradation; because if he had employed it much, he would have found by his practice the necessity of making his figures of the second degree without force and effect.

I do not however mean to say that Raphael was entirely ignorant of the effects of Clare obscure; I say only that his practice of designing, and to bring into the foreground, by means of white and black, all the figures which his fertile genius suggested to him, took him from this part, by making him think only of design; and for that reason one does not see two sketches coloured by his own hand; and if at any time one sees in his works some beautiful accident of Clare obscure, it arises only, as has been said, from the imitation of nature.

Raphael, according to all appearances, sketched his works upon little models of wax, to see the effect they made; and I believe that the beautiful accidents in the Eliodorus, and the mass of Clare obscure in the Transfiguration are derived from the effects which he copied from his Models. I think one might also discover the same in the School of Athens, and in the Theology, where one might observe that in that part in which the models have been able naturally to produce a mass, and shade, there is good Clare obscure; and in the parts opposite to

the light, one sees not any accident of this kind. Accidents in painting signify all the shades, which do not appertain to the roundness or graduation, and which the Painter is at liberty to make or not; as happens when one wishes that the half of a figure be illuminated only, it is the custom to place it by the side of another, which deprives it of one part of the light, and since such things are arbitrary, they are therefore called ACCIDENTS.

Raphael however did not understand that part, nor had in his *Clare obscure* more than that which gives of itself a pure graduation, and I am almost persuaded, that many times he contented himself to model only one part of his paintings, because one sees frequent errors of *Clare obscure*.

CHAP. III.

OF THE COLOURING OF RAPHAEL.

RAPHAEL had not in his colouring those examples which he found in Design, and was therefore constrained to begin by imitating feeble Nature, which happened likewise to Painters who preceded him; and having from the beginning painted in fresco, he could not exactly imitate Truth. The same happened to Correggio, who in his frescos

is not so various or transparent as in his paintings in oil; and nothing remains of his natural style, except grace, and beautiful clare obscure. Titian could not have had any variety in that style of painting; and if any one would wish to support the contrary, I could convince him, that in that same style of painting, Raphael was more various than Titian: but we will return to Raphael. In his second style, which he took from Father Bartholomy, he has a better tone of colouring; he is not so grey, and he impasted better, but he is too uniform; all his figures are brown, and appear of a rough and ordinary skin. This taste remained with him a long time, and one may say that he never abandoned it entirely.

However when he began to do the frescos of the Vatican, he abandoned in some measure that style, by adopting another more finished; and although timid, yet he varied better, as one sees in the painting of Theology. He began then to imagine, that some complexions are white, and others are brown, some of an opaque tint, and others transparent, as one observes in the Christ and his Angels, who have flesh more delicate than men; for which reason that Painting is the best coloured of all that he has done in fresco. He here acquired practice, and great boldness in painting; but he discovered confusion in the colouring, as one sees in the School of Athens. He then corrected it a little in Eliodorous, which he coloured with more force and with a more free pencil, but he did not yet succeed in the delicacy of colouring; his women and children remaining in a

manner grey. Lastly, the great attention which he paid to design, made him forget the colouring, as in the conflagration of Borgo. One sees from thence, that Raphael neglected the parts which lead to perfection, and applied himself to acquire practice by dispatching quickly, which opened to him a more easy road to fortune; and in fact he lived more as a prince than a painter.

This happened in the time of Leon the 10th. who was very indulgent and generous to Raphael, who flattered the ambition of that Pope, by suggesting to him magnificent projects of architecture to embellish Rome, and to restitute it to the splendour in which it was under the first Roman Emperors. These occupations by which Raphael gave his paintings to his disciples, occasioned a great loss to painting. There is no comparison in what he did in the time of Julius the 2nd. and those under Leon the 10th; but to repair in some manner the injury which the art and his esteem had suffered, he employed the whole power of his abilities in the great work of Transfiguration.

In some parts of this work, one observes a very good colouring; but it is not given equally throughout the whole; as his men have much better colouring than his women. There are parts not painted by Raphael; such as the Energumenus and his group, where one discovers the timid pencil of Gulio Romano. The heads of the Apostles of the opposite part are repainted by Raphael, because one here discovers all his bold and masterly retouches; in that neverthe-

less there is too much uniformity in the tone of colouring, and the complexions appear hard and dry. In general he used little of yellow and vermillion. He understood very well the effect which obscurity has in colours, by destroying and converting them into grey and black; and since he regarded not reflection, he laboured only with the clare and obscure, of which he composed the half tints; for which reason they are all grey; and since delicate complexions require more variety than common ones, those of Raphael are very uniform, and of a trivial colour, for want of reflection.

It has been a misfortune to painting, that Raphael in his best time had not painted wholly with his own hand some intire painting in oil; and that he suffered the whole to be sketched by his disciples, and principally by Gulio Romano who was of a taste naturally hard and cold, and of a timid pencil, although smooth and finished. I say it is a misfortune that Raphael had not finished a painting alone, because we should then have seen what he could do in the part of colouring; because we see clearly in the Transfiguration, that the heads of the Apostles repainted by him, and which from their character admit of a pencil lively and impassed, are of a beautiful colouring. The head of the woman in the foreground of the painting is very grey. I believe when the painting was fresh, that head was not as it is at present, because Raphael having retouched it lightly, to conserve the smoothness and finish of Gulio Romano, the

light colours have not been able to resist the effect of time. In the same figure there is a little correction in the large toe, where one discovers, that to hide the error of the first sketch, he was obliged to impart it a good deal, and that part is much better painted and coloured than the rest. One sees the same correction in the thumb of the foreshortened hand of the Apostle, in the foreground, and for this reason that part remains also better painted and preserved. That which I say, one finds better in the portrait by Raphael which is preserved at Florence in the house of Altoviti, in which one observes a style of painting resembling more that of Giorgione and of Correggio, than of the same Raphael in his other works, and in which appears solely his design which is correct to perfection, and superior to all other painters.

One ought not to wonder that the paintings of Raphael in fresco are of better colouring than those which he painted in oil. I shall produce the different reasons. He practiced fresco more than any other style of painting. The earth colours which he used, appear much more beautiful in fresco than in oil. Besides he could not employ his disciples to sketch his frescos, as he did his paintings in oil, in which he employed Giulio Romano, who sketched almost all his works. It is impossible but one must discover the sketch in a finished painting, because if one changes it intirely, it would be useless to make it. Raphael had many occupations; and inventing and designing so many things, left him no time

to paint the entire of his pieces with his own hand, for which reason he did only that which Giulio Romano was unable to do. He found besides too little errors to discover the alteration which his works could suffer; and for that reason he contented himself with retouching them lightly, but with diligence, so that I believe he never suffered a piece to go from his hands which he did not believe finished. Painting in oil has however the inconvenience, that the first grounds are always diaphanous when the humidity and the grease of the oil is exhaled; for that reason when paintings are old, they lose the lustre of the finishing hand, and leave discoverable the colours and retouches which are under.

From whence I conclude, that Raphael knew, notwithstanding, how to colour very well, but that he had not sufficient practice in painting in oil to pass for a colourist when compared to his contemporaries Correggio and Titian, who were in that part very superior. But with respect to colouring in fresco, he surpassed all painters of the Roman School, and equalled the best of the others; but since this kind of painting is somewhat imperfect, I do not believe that I ought to judge of it with rigour; and in oil he was not so excellent as to merit admiration.

C H A P. IV.

OF THE COMPOSITION OF RAPHAEL.

RAPHAEL was in Composition not only great, but wonderful. This is the part which does him the greatest honour. Here he is original, not having had models to imitate, either from the ancients or moderns ; from whence one might say, that he added to painting, that part, which the ancients, according to the idea we have of their works, did not possess to such perfection ; and if he had possessed the other parts of painting in a degree equally excellent, he would have been, without dispute, the first painter in the world.

The principal thing which one ought to observe in a painting is the invention ; that is, the expression of truth in a subject ; and in that Raphael has not had an equal. None of the figures placed by him in his history, could serve in a subject of different expression. The ALLEGRO and PENSIEROSO, the cholerick and the melancholic, are all placed in their perfect situations ; nor is the expression only in each figure, but the whole of the history with its episodes, equally correspond to the passion of the principal figure. He displays his great talent in the marvellous variety with which he has known how to declare the same expression ; making sometimes many

figures serve to one motion, and to the expression of one sole member, and that not by chance, but according to the true dignity, and force of expression which it requires.

One sees in his paintings, variety of things without contradiction ; violent passions without affectation, and without baseness, manifesting the expression sometimes in the motion of a finger, and the effect of the passions in the tendons of the members. He knew how to employ and make many things beautiful, by the occasions and manner of accommodating them, which in many cases would otherwise have been defective. In short, between a painting of Raphael and one of any other painter, there is as great difference in the expression, as there would be between an Alexander the Great, and the Comedian who represents him ; who might studiously represent all the actions of the original, but certainly not so natural as the hero who was operated by impulse. This diversity arises from all the other painters not having known how to find the just emotions which the soul produces in the body ; nor have they considered that every extreme is vitious, and that every action carried to excess is like a man without wisdom. In place of dignified persons they have frenetic figures, and when they have wished to express moderation, they have represented insensible objects.

These means, being so difficult, one cannot find them but by the way followed by Raphael. But this is only granted to a great genius, - and philoso.

pher who observes ponderates and reflects on things; and such ought to be the genius of a painter, and not as is vulgarly believed that which is full of fire. It is false, that painting only requires a lively genius; it requires a mind to know how to comprehend well different consequences, and to distinguish the good from the bad: it requires besides a sensible heart, in which virtue and the passions, are easily impressed. Such was without doubt the mind of Raphael; otherwise how could he have been able to have given such variety to his compositions? He ought necessarily to have had the capacity of varying his own passions, and of conceiving with clearness the action he had to give to a person placed in a determinate situation, to know how to represent it in painting. The mind precedes the action, and he who has not first well imagined a thing, can never paint it; and if he does it by study, and by artifice borrowed from others, he will paint a body without a soul, nor ever will produce in the spectators the necessary impression to warm their imagination to the point of representing to them the action which is desired.

To this effect Raphael had a practice secure, and totally different from other painters, who place all their attention in the group, and in the composition of each figure according to the contrast and the rules of the art; but he began by diversifying in his mind the end of his history, and of all the objects according to the general expression: he then thought of each figure in particular, nor disposed of any one without ex-

amining well the reason of all that which it ought to explain, beginning by distributing the members which have to operate, according to the passions of the mind, in their natural posture, and he left more or less in repose, those which had no part there. He observed the convenience and character of each figure. He knew that a virtuous person ought to show moderation; that a philosopher or an apostle has not to move like a soldier; and lastly, by these means he knew how to discover the simplicity of the mind, devotion, and the internal and external passions. I call internal passions those which in painting ought to be expressed by little parts, and by the most active members; as the eyes, the forehead, the nose, the mouth, the fingers, and all the extremities in which reside the first motions of all the passions; since their excess admits not of moderation: then when they move the whole of the body, I call them exteriors. Raphael was very attentive not to make the actions terminate; that is, such as it happens when a man can do nothing else. For example, when a man walks, if he has terminated a step, he has nothing more to do but to begin it again; and this posture in a painting will not produce so animated an effect as another represented in the act of not having finished his step, because the imagination of the spectator is occupied in fancying that the figure is going to finish it, and still conceives, that he cannot remain there as he would imagine if the action were compleat. A person who throws, receives,

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or gives a thing, will have a better effect in painting than another who has already thrown, given, or received a thing; because then the action is already finished, and the figure remains without occupation.

Raphael possessed also that occult finesse in general little known to painters; that is, an admirable ease and apparent negligence, which is so difficult to acquire; as also the art of hiding with ability a member, such as a hand, foot, &c. He hid those things not because he knew not how to make them well, but from the motive of not showing idle parts, which might take from the principal ones some beauty, and sometimes he hid some parts only to avoid their ugly form, which would have been the necessary result in that determinate place.

Some people will be surprised perhaps, that I prefer Raphael in Composition to all other painters. I shall adduce my reasons in order that any one might judge me by comparing my ideas with truth.

Composition is in general of two kinds. That of Raphael is the expressive; and in this Pussin and Dominichino might also be found in their place. The second regarded only the effect, that is, he directed his principal attention to fill agreeably with figures a large painting. Of this kind Lanfranco was an inventor, and Peter of Cortona a great promoter. Between the two they have left to posterity great examples of such taste, which please much the eye of many, but have a cold effect on the intelligent.

I have therefore preferred Raphael to all the others, because he did every thing with reason. He never descended to low ideas, nor prodigalized the same Beauty in the accessories, when they could distract the attention from the principal figure. Pussin often ran into the contrary effect; as might be proved in his famous *Adulteress*, because it would be a very ordinary painting if one were to take away the accessory parts. His Christ is rather badly made; and being able to make of the accusers a group of people of consideration, and to represent Christ as a divine Judge, one sees that his principal attention is placed in the most indifferent persons of the painting. In *Pyrrus* the ground, and the figures most distant on the other side of the river, are the things most beautiful: such also are the soldiers in the foreground, on account of the *Gladiator* which is there repeated. The women are very ordinary. Pussin neglected in general, the principal things; and the episodes of his composition, are the only things to be admired in his paintings. He had not the elevated ideas of Raphael. He affected erudition, and gives suspicion of having composed some paintings expressly to show that which he had seen or read in the ancients. He was less noble, and less graceful than Raphael: when he aspired to nobleness he was cold; and when he wished to be graceful he became trifling and ordinary. His *Assuerus* has the same coldness; *Esther* is beautiful, but a statue: the group of servants which support her have too much symmetry; and

are as of a finished action. The figures in the flank appear as if they had learnt their motions as soldiers learn their exercise. In fine Pussin is excellent in the expression of ordinary figures, and of low and violent characters. His grounds are beautiful, and all his excellence consists in what one might call the œconomy of painting; that is, in imagining well the place where the action ought to succeed, and where the persons ought to be placed, regarding little the composition of them.

Dominichino had much Expression, and Design; and these were all his capital. But the expression which he gave to all his heads one knows not how to conceive of what kind it be, unless it might arise from an air of timidity which he applied to them right or wrong; so that it is a style of his own, rather than expression. This style is suitable only for children who have little force and variety; and in these Dominichino had much merit. In the other figures he was cold, and wanted variety. Many of his ideas were low and ordinary; he often produced repetitions, and had favorite subjects which he repeated continually. One might finally say, that to have made a composition perfectly expressive, it would have been of advantage for Raphael to have composed the figures, Pussin the ground and the attributes, and Dominichino the children: therefore every one will accord to Raphael the most excellent and principal part.

As much as the first kind of Composition is

superior to the other which I have called the effect, so much is Raphael superior to the other painters who have adopted this effect; because to these the principal and most essential part of painting is wanting, which is Truth. They do not interest or occupy the minds of spectators, and in every subject they represent the figures and characters always the same. Such kind of paintings cannot produce any good or moral effect, which is the end of expression in painting, and which without pain, but rather with delight, ought to teach virtue, and make it glow in our hearts.

Some people might say that MECHANICAL Painters, such as Lanfranco and Cortona, cannot subject themselves to exact truth, because the fire of composition transports them beyond the limits of scrupulous exactness; but every one must know there is not less obligation to observe Truth in a composition of a hundred figures than in one of ten. This reason cannot excuse any painter with people of good sense: the more so, as I speak here of invention, and not of effect, which belongs to Claret obscure; from whence it arises that Raphael did not possess all the Ideal required; but with all that no painter has made larger paintings, or more replete with figures. In the whole he has known how to dispose wonderfully his groups; and he has collected them well; each figure in particular is that which it ought to be, and all are according to the most precise Truth. What other excuse then can the MACCHINISTI alledge for their style?

I shall here slightly advertise that one ought not to judge of Raphael after any print but those which he gave to be executed by his disciples. That great man did as men of wisdom ought to do, who after having disposed their inventions confusedly, apply themselves to clear each group, and particular figure. repassing the composition many times, and in different designs. This does not arise from want of talent; quite the contrary: it arises from that judgment which is difficult to be satisfied. Happy is the painter who in every work improves, learns, and finds in his genius new resources, to make always a lasting progress in the art!

C H A P. V.

OF THE IDEAL BEAUTY OF RAPHAEL.

By the Ideal I mean that which one sees only in the imagination, and not with the eyes; from which the Ideal in painting consists in the choice of beautiful things in nature, free of every imperfection.

In all the parts of painting enters the Ideal. In design the Ideal is supernatural Beauty, produced by reuniting various beautiful parts, agreeing with each other. In Colour obscure it

is the mass, and accidents chosen purposely to augment the beauty of a work. In colouring it is the election of the tone which one gives to the things one represents, and the use of colours more or less strong; and most proper to receive the rays of light; the choice and the employment of each thing with security and art; as also the general tone of harmony which one gives to a painting, forms the Ideal in colouring. The Ideal in composition, consists in imagining an action not seen; in giving expressions which one cannot copy from nature; and in using accidents and poetical ideas. Lastly the Ideal enters into the characters of the figures which one has to represent; such as in the posture; in the hair of the head; in the motions of the hands; in the movements of the feet; and in the gestures of all the body; according to the temperament one would wish to give them in order that they may produce more effect and variety in the painting.

There is nothing singular in my placing in the Ideal of Composition the character of the form, although that appears to regard Design.

The Ideal embraces two parts. The first is to think of a thing and to adapt it to its place: this belongs to Composition. The second is the Execution; and this is proper to Design; in which one ought to be aware that all the lines have the same character.

It behoves me also to say, that the Ideal has likewise access in the composition of Dra-

pery; since to represent a man running swiftly, it is necessary, (copying nature,) to make the cloaths fly to one side; and when it is proper to do it in any other manner, is necessary to use the Ideal. If, for example, an Angel flies, it is necessary to show by the drapery if he ascends or descends; and in each member, and in all the figure, to make known by the folds, if he be truly in action, or if he has accomplished it; if the motion be placid, strong, or violent, and if it be the beginning or the end of the action: in fine, I believe the Ideal ought to enter even in the hair.

To conceive and know what is this Ideal, and to what end it extends, I advise painters chiefly to read the poets, who have written nothing without having first imagined it, and those who have known how to choose the best of their ideas are the most excellent. So that in no art does the Ideal so much appear as in Poetry, and Painting, when they are managed by a great genius; and for that reason the Ancients stiled Painting dumb Poetry, and Poetry a speaking Picture. But we will now return to Raphael.

Raphael used not the Ideal in painting, except in the natural parts; but he availed of it much in the execution of the characters which he wished to represent. One cannot oppose to that the beauty with which he did the head of his Madonna, because this arises from the beauty of the expression. Raphael made visible in her modesty, nobleness, chastity, and love towards her divine child; but whoever has a fineness of

taste will agree, that if the daughter of Niobe were of a similar expression, it would by much surpass the Virgin of Raphael; and it would appear, that the last had painted a Queen with all grace and nobleness; and the ancient artist a Divinity, and the mother of God.

Raphael changed and improved Nature with regard to Expression; but he left it as he found it with regard to Beauty; and sometimes one could also imagine better the objects. He generally gave to his figures a very pleasing air, which showed their virtue; but they are always human persons. His Christ is no more than a man, if one compares him to Jove or Apollo. His Fathers Eternal might be found in nature, and perhaps even more beautiful than them. In order for his figures to appear divine, he should have given to his heads more air of Majesty, and should less have shown those parts which denote mortality. A wrinkled skin, and torbid eyes show the weakness of nature. What impropriety, to represent the Creator of all things subject to human misery! Since the custom has prevailed of representing him under the figure of an old man, it is necessary to make him in a manner in which appears the venerableness of age, but without its imperfections, and that it fills the imagination with the grand idea which we ought to have of the omnipotent; but to produce that, it is not necessary to attend so much to truth as Raphael has done, who has

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depicted him with all the miseries of an old man.

The Grecians were excellent in the Ideal part. When they represented the figures of the Gods, they neither showed the veins or the tendons, or at least they did not mark them as in men; and if in the Hercules such things are visible, every one knows that it ought to be thus. Whilst that hero was supposed living and reposing after his fatigue, he was not a God, for supposing such, he would not have been fatigued; and in the system of Paganism, there was a great difference between the Gods and Heroes, or Demigods. Lastly, the aforesaid manner of representing Divinity one might see in the Apollo, and in the Jove, which are in the Vatican Museum.

Also in the harmony, and in the accordance of the forms, the ancients are much superior to Raphael. He knew, for example, how he ought to make the forehead serene or torbid; pensive or chearful, &c. but he knew not what nose or cheeks would go well with that forehead. When the ancients made a smooth and serene forehead, they made also the nose square, and the cheeks of the same form and character.

Lastly, the particular character of the ancients is, that by one part of the face, one might know the character of the whole. Raphael has not this advantage, as one might take a nose from any of his faces, and substitute another, without causing any dissonance. His Virgins have all a serene forehead, be-

lieving thus to manifest nobleness and bashfulness.

The same is in the heads of the children of Niobe. Raphael made this by means of Expression, and not of Beauty, because if he had known the beautiful Ideal, he would have united to that forehead, a nose of moderate contour, and not so overcharged as he has made it; but as he had only Expression in view, he neglected almost all the rest. He made the cheeks of the said images round, in order to give his Virgins a youthful air, but that does not accord with Truth, because a person who has fleshy cheeks, has always the forehead divided in various parts by the volume of the muscles. The style of the ancients is not thus: all the parts accord with them. The mouths of the Virgins of Raphael have all a little inclination to laughter, thus to denote love, and the innocence of youth; but this does not agree with true Beauty. The same one might say of the Expression of modesty which he gives to the eyes.

From all this I infer, that Raphael was not Ideal in Beauty, but only in the execution of Expression. He who is little satisfied with my reasonings let him tell me, why Raphael made not his Angels as beautiful as they ought to be? because being purely Ideal figures, the imagination of the painter had a field to display as much Beauty as he liked. He must likewise tell me why he did not paint Venus and the Graces, in the Taste of the ancients, or in some other which at least approached it? When he had not any

strong expression to paint, he was a pure imitator of Nature, nor knew what was Ideal Beauty. From which I think I may be able to conclude, that Raphael had exquisite Taste, little idea in Design, in Colouring less, and in Clare Obscure none. In general in Composition he had much of the Ideal; also in Expression, and likewise much Beauty. From which one might deduce, how much he ought to be praised in Composition, Expression, and in the symmetry of the bodies of certain kinds of figures; and one might also deduce, that his Taste in Design was excellent, and that he has opened the way to beautiful drapery, although very little varied.

PART THE THIRD.

C H A P. I.

OF THE TASTE OF CORREGGIO.

CORREGGIO, like all the other Painters of his time, began with little Taste, and was fervily attached to nature, but he freed himself from it sooner than all the rest. Some pretend that he knew not the Antiques, but that is contradicted by some of his figures of women, composed to resemble the Venus of Medicis. Besides that, Andrew Mantegna, his master, was so great an admirer of antiquity, that his rivals said, he did ill not to finish his paintings of one sole grey colour, because thus they would at least have appeared of the ancient bas-relief. This is a false criticism, because Mantegna had not either the Grace, Beauty, or Taste of the ancients; but solely desired to imitate them. Then if Correggio learnt to paint of Mantegna, which is very probable, as his first paint-

ings partake something of his Taste, although a little more oft, it is not therefore probable, that he was ignorant of the ancients, being the disciple of a partizan so strenuous in antiquity.

It is also commonly said, that Correggio was never at Rome, but others maintain the contrary, and pretend further, that from a painting which was in the ancient church of the Holy Apostles at Rome, he took the idea for painting the Cupola at Parma. The truth is, that of these things we know nothing for certain, and the same might be said of a thousand other stories which are told of him, all full of contradictions.

As for what regards his Taste, I return to say, that he was very dry and steril, although he took his figures from Nature. But presently he saw that it was not sufficient to imitate Nature wholly, but that it was necessary to select the good from the bad, in order that the imitation might become pleasing. Thus it happens, that his paintings had not sufficient force to imitate Nature in all its extensions, and he found it was necessary not to imitate Nature, but its effects.

From these reflections he changed his Taste to another more sweet; and considering that the sole rotundity of parts do not constitute true imitation, and that it was necessary to break off that rotundity by varying the forms, he discovered a new taste of Design, almost unknown before him. He began therefore to practice that drapery which gives such elegance to his paintings. To this practice aided also the contours of the objects of his own country, because the persons of

Lombardy are as the figures which he painted. He advanced always perfectionating, in order to give the highest force to his paintings, and formed a Taste so original, that no one since has been able to imitate him.

The Caracci's have endeavoured to follow his steps: they have followed him, but not imitated him. Lewis Caracci was too harsh and uniform. Annibal varied little the form; and where Correggio made the contours waving, he made them circular, and never convex. I say nothing of the colouring, because never have the Caracci's remained famous in this: they were always opaque.

In short, Correggio and Raphael have been little imitated, because they possessed the most transcendent parts of the art. Raphael was eminent in the Ideal of Composition, and Correggio in Clare Obscure, and one part of colouring. We shall now proceed to examine the parts most interesting in Painting, and begin with Design.

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C H A P. II.

OF THE DESIGN OF CORREGGIO.

THE first taste of the Design of Correggio, was, as I have said, dry, servile, and rectilinear. He executed, like the inventors of the art, what by force of his proper genius he found in Nature itself, discovering by little and little the variety of the contours. Appearances make me believe that Correggio had seen the antiques and endeavoured to imitate them. If he had not seen them as one sees them at Rome, he might have seen them, as one sees them at Parma, that is, in little quantity and not very excellent; but to a great genius it is sufficient to show the pattern of a thing to give an idea of what the piece might be. I hazard this conjecture, because one does not see any work of Correggio intermediate with his dry style, and his grand Taste; some causes therefore, must have led him to a stride so rapid. A piece of antiquity could make in his mind the same impression, which the works of Michael Angelo did in Raphael; but this effect could not happen without a favourable internal disposition; because exterior objects serve only, as one may say, to put in fermentation, the principles which are held inert and without exercise.

It is not extraordinary, if we know but little of the life of Correggio, because all his historians describe him as a most timid character. It might be that he was at Rome, but was known only to few persons, which happens to many young painters; otherwise it would be necessary to suppose that he studied with incredible fatigue some piece of antiquity, or that he took his beautiful Taste of Designing, and his great style by seeking variety in different forms, and in clare obscure. Desiring always to break off the contours by clare obscure, and to vary continually the tints, he discovered not to be able to perform it with straight and simple contours, because if the exterior form be such, the interior cannot be waved. In his first style he found that difficulty, and it has therefore no resemblance to those contours of his grand style, which are all waved, that is, composed of curved, concave, or convex lines, and if there be any straight line one scarce perceives it.

The effect which these curved lines produce, is the invaluable grace which stamps the sovereign character of Correggio. The convex line engrandises, and the concave gives legenity. The ancients disposed in their contours of more lines and angles than Correggio, because they composed with straight, convex, concave, and angular lines, and Correggio used only the two opposite ones, concave and convex. For that reason, he is sometimes affected, vulgar, and common; which arises from having used the convex in place of the straight line, and the

concave in place of the angular. This is the cause why he had not the nervous Taste of Raphael, or the nobleness and characteristic of the ancients. Nevertheless, the Design of Correggio is not so despicable as some people believe, because at least it has one principal part of perfection, which is the Ideal, in which consists grace.

CHAP. III.

OF THE CLARE OBSCURE OF CORREGGIO.

IN this so important article of the art, Correggio arrived to the summit of eminence; and I am surpris'd, that painters are so blind, that they do not praise him more in that, than in colouring, which is not his best part.

If they would study their profession, they would comprehend presently, that the force of that great man is in the rotundity, and truth of the Clare Obscure, and if we were to take away that he would remain inferior to Giorgioni, Titian or Vandyke; but the grace which results from his rotundity, and always varied taste, oblige one to confess, that if he has not painted man perfect, he has produced figures the most graceful in the world,

In my opinion, Correggio has surpassed all other Painters in *Clare Obscure*. Raphael as I have said in his place, arrived not to give to his figures the the same effect of Nature, and for that reason he failed much in the truth of that part. Truth in painting is that which is subsisting and effective, and is not subject to contradictions, and differs not from the thing itself. According to Truth nature never presents different objects with the same force, and in that Correggio was more intelligent than in any other thing, and executed it with perfection.

The different postures, and situations of the body make different effects of light; and the same form of the parts vary the accidents, because a rotund object gives a luminous point, and a plain one light itself; and that made Correggio conceive that he ought not to give to different things an equal force, or form of light; that the internal clearness of a painting is different according as the parts become illuminated from the interposed air; and that the mist of light and darkness produces a grey tint; and lastly he knew that a continued variety was necessary, and that therefore one should never repeat the same force either in the *Clare* or the *Obscure*.

One observes in Correggio another quality, which increases much the beauty of his works, and which is, his having known how to give to each shade the tone correspondent to its colour. For example, in his paintings one distinguishes very well the shade of a cloth of rose colour from a red cloth, and a white skin from the shade of a

brown. To give force to a fair complexion, he used shade, but to the same shade he gave reflections of light; and when he had to use the most perfect white, he opposed another colour more obscure; thus he gave distinction to things without ever employing affected contradictions; so that he never illuminated an obscure matter to make it serve as a clear ground to the shade of a clear matter. In short he left every colour to its degree and dignity.

CHAP. IV.

OF THE COLOURING OF CORREGGIO.

CORREGGIO had a very good colouring, but not very delicate or refined. The ground is generally brown like the people of his country. His flesh appears too solid, which arises from his colours being yellowish, redish, and greenish in the half tint. In nature, fat makes the palid colour; flesh the red; humidity the blueish; colour; and upon those effects Correggio made not sufficient observations; so that his figures appear of too rough a skin, as if besmeared with grease. His shades are too uniform and monotonous, and partake a little of the brown colour. Of the rest he chose well the grounds of

the drapery, and admirably conserved the graduations of the flesh. He did not equal the vivacity of Titian; the softness of the pencil of Giorgione, or the delicacy of Vandyke, but he was great in painting women and children. In general he was sufficiently harmonious; although his colours in the figures of men were too smooth.

CHAP. V.

OF THE COMPOSITION OF CORREGGIO.

CORREGGIO had for the models of his compositions things very little interesting, and for that reason he displayed no truly beautiful invention. In the beginning, his inventions tended more to effect than expression; although he always had a little more of expression in his lively subjects, than in his serious ones.

He characterised well the affections of love, although with little variety in the figures; so that little difference passed between the heads of his Madonnas and those of his Venus's and Nymphs. He accommodated sufficiently well his groups, but all his paintings appear done to explain the beautiful mass of Clare obscure, rather than the natural expression of the sub-

ject. His foreshortenings were admirable; and I believe that he formed models of wax for all the figures of his Histories, and by such means he composed all his foreshortenings; and to this end one might reduce all the rules of his composition; because except that, all is dream, or imagination very remote from ideal Beauty. He abhorred in such a manner things straight or direct, that he scarce made a head which was not either bent or raised.

CHAP. VI.

OF THE IDEAL OF CORREGGIO.

CORREGGIO was Ideal in that part of Design which respects the elegance of the contours. For what regards clear obscure one might dispute it, because he who produces things according to nature will not appear to be Ideal; notwithstanding that, I maintain that he was so, because it is of advantage to have a great imagination in forming maxims and certain rules; and to execute them constantly, it is necessary to fix them forcibly in the mind; for as Raphael said, to make a thing beautiful it is necessary to have in the idea a model still more beautiful; and this is what is called Ideal Beauty. One

cannot deny that it is a great thing, and a proof of much merit, to know how to make in an art so difficult, things which produce effects more pleasing than Nature itself; since that shows all the objects individually, and disposed by means of the infinite degrees of clear obscure and colouring, which things cannot be imitated exactly by painting. Because if Nature, for example, discovers any little spot or fold in the shade, we see the same thing still more distinct in the light, by reason that here the shade is true shade, and in painting it is only an obscure colour; and it is necessary that a painting be illuminated in order to be seen. Natural light has splendour in itself, and in painting it is nothing more than a clear colour. To view a painting it ought to be placed in a manner not resplendant, that it may not have the same effect of light; otherwise one should not be able to distinguish any thing. For this reason it is necessary that in the execution, the painter should avail of certain rules, and certain ratiocinations, which are merely ideal, making the things which are in the shade, more obscure than those which are in the light, but not by that has he to pretend to make it equal to Truth; that is impossible; because art not having such degrees of variety as nature, it ought to work only by comparison; that is to say, feigning a light of whatsoever degree: it ought to make the second tint of a degree more obscure than in nature, and thus the painting will appear true. If then one were to place the half-

tint as it really is in nature, it would certainly want the necessary colour to imitate light.

Being thus proved that Correggio observed all these rules to perfection, I believe that he merits the title of an Ideal and sublime painter in the part of Clare Obscure. For what regards colouring, he has not been the imitator of Nature, except in the part of drapery, which he knew how to choose according to the necessary mass. He knew also perfectly the force and degree of colouring, in order to revive or weaken that which he thought agreed with the composition. He had enough of the Ideal for certain intricate figures, but that is Ideal in effect, and not in fundament. In short Correggio subjected all the parts of painting to the election of beautiful effect, and Clare Obscure, and all the beauty which he had besides is derived from that principle.

PART THE FOURTH.

CHAP. I.

OF THE TASTE OF TITIAN.

TITIAN began to study painting in the School of Giovanni, and of Gentil Bellino; but one finds no work of his done after that taste; from whence I believe that he applied himself to copy only some paintings of those professors to make his studies apart. Also Giorgione was at the same school; but surpassed his masters quicker than Titian did, because it appears to me that his talent was much the same as that of Correggio, and he found by the same way a beautiful clare obscure, and a taste more raised and powerful than that of Bellini. Titian seeing that, abandoned his masters, and put himself to study with Giorgione, taking from him force, sweetness, and rotundity; but generally speaking he could not equal him in the grandeur of Taste, Yet notwithstanding, in the Vef-

try of the Church DELLA SALUTE at Venice, there is a beautiful painting by Titian, of a colouring more brilliant than those of Giorgione, or even any others of his own works. In short, he then knew how to aggrandize his stile, and to improve his taste, as well in the form as in the Colouring; although he made some of his works admirable, and others worth nothing.

One might almost say that Vice was a Virtue in the Venitian School, since it made pomp of solicitude in painting; and for that reason it esteemed Tintoretti, who had no other merit. From whence it arises that in that school there were few designers; because to design well, requires much patience, and much reflection, in order to meditate each part and combine the whole together. Titian, although he knew how to design well, ran frequently into the vice of dispatching quickly; but for all that he is superior in design to all the other Venitian painters; because he had wisdom, and patience, to paint almost always from nature: however without fatiguing himself to study the reasons, he contented himself with only the effects. By these means he acquired an admirable colouring, which is the part in which he surmounted above all others in his best time. Towards the last years of his life, from weakness of age, he changed his style, and produced a Taste low and trivial, preserving notwithstanding a general good tone of colouring.

Many times he was harsh, because he wished to dispatch quickly. His best works are to be

seen at Venice, and among other paintings there is a beautiful Venus in the house of Grafsi, designed and painted in his best time; but his best painting is Saint Peter the Martyr, in which he shows great design and colouring, and appears there to have surpassed himself. All his parts are studied from nature, without the appearance of the art with which they are done; and they are painted with such boldness, that they appear as done from idea.

In general Titian did not finish much his paintings. But with the little he did, he expressed as much as Correggio with all his attention and fatigue. In the last, however, all is as reason, and in the first excellent imitation of nature.

His drapery is light, and it has also the Ideal; but partakes of minutiae and triteness. His fields are the most beautiful that I know; but the part in which he is so eminently superior is, in colouring, and in certain bold strokes, which would be useful to augment the beauty of Correggio. Lastly, no one has known so well as him how to use the half tint of blood colour which has an effect as beautiful as Nature.

C H A P. II.

OF THE DESIGN OF TITIAN.

At the beginning, Titian was dry in his contours, from imitating his master. He then enlarged his taste, by endeavouring to imitate nature; and lastly, to give freedom to his pencil, he neglected Design, and gave into an ordinary and vulgar taste. Notwithstanding that, he has made his children more beautiful than any other painter; so much so, that Pussin studied him always in that and Fiammingo the most famous in that part, took his children from Titian.

There is no doubt of his having had the talent to become a great Designer; because he possessed much exactness of sight for imitating nature and antiquity, if he had wished to have studied it; but the transport of colouring left him no time to make this part a solid study; from whence I run no risk in saying that Titian has been a good Designer.

C H A P. III.

OF THE COLOURING OF TITIAN.

UNFORTUNATELY we have so few paintings of Giorgione, that one can scarce conjecture sufficient by them to judge of his abilities: we have however enough of Titian when he imitated him, not to doubt to which of the two we ought to attribute the merit of having taught posterity the painting of drapery, and the use of colours. In short, I attribute that invention to Titian, since one sees in his paintings, that if he were not the inventor, he managed that art as if he had created it. He was the first after the reestablishment of painting, who knew how to profit advantageously of the ideal in different colours of drapery. Before him all the colours of drapery were used indifferently, and almost the whole were painted with the same degree of clare and obscure. Titian and Giorgioni knew that red approximates things; that yellow attracts and retains the rays of light; that blue is shade, and is fit for making any thing very obscure. They knew also the effects of rich colours, and further knew how to make advantage of all these observations. By such means Titian found the true idea of beautiful colouring, and the manner of giving the same grace, clearness of tone,

and dignity of colour, to shade, and the half tints as to light.

And thus he knew how to distinguish with a quantity of half tints the transparent from the rough skin, and with the pure colours of yellow and black, he painted pinguidity, and finally, he arrived to signify with each tint, the true propriety of any thing; and knowing besides that transparent colours were more indecisive than the opaque, and that the light fixed in the one, and passed to the other, he acquired that eminent degree of colouring in which he has not had a competitor.

The Roman school has never had the practice of good colouring. That of Lombardy has possessed it a little better; and the Venitian school has been excellent in it.

This arises from practice. The Venitians exercised much the painting of portraits; which gave them the opportunity of learning the art from nature, and of studying its great variety; because those who were, portrayed wished to be painted in their own garments, and for that reason the Painter was obliged to imitate a great variety of things, such as velvet, sattin, silk, cloth, linen, gems, &c. and they left not that to be revived much by the genius of the artist, who they wished to do it well, nor could excuse him, if he did not perform it..

The amateurs seeing the things well imitated, accustomed themselves to that taste of painting; and to please them it was necessary that the painter should make his portrait someway striking,

and that he should also make it variously rich, in order that they might see the portraits as they were. In Rome where the ancient taste predominates, they make little account of this variety, and endeavour to make things with the greatest simplicity possible. The amateurs search for the most heroical subjects, in which great variety is hurtful. From their infancy they learn these maxims, and accustom themselves to a taste of colouring which is not so various or so true as the Ideal and chosen style.

The Germans, Flemings, and Dutch, have had better colouring than the Romans. Rubens and Vandyke improved much their style by painting velvet and fatten; and the first gave it such style of reflections and accidents of light that he made the flesh as relucant as the fatten. He had studied Titian, whose taste was a little compatible with his own, but his colouring is admirable and various, nor has he ever forgotten the general harmony. Rubens knew not what this was, and when he wished to practice it, he assembled only colours in a mass, making one reflect upon the other, without observing that colours offend the sight when they do not accord well with another. Behold a clear example.

The colours of the Iris have among them a good harmony; but if one takes away the red, the blue, or the yellow, the harmony is presently destroyed. The same happens in a painting, in which is wanting some of the aforesaid colours; and the reason is, that their true concordance consists only in the equilibrium of the

three principal colours, red, blue, and yellow. Rubens placed in his paintings much of some of these three colours, but he knew not the equilibrium like Titian, who made all his paintings according to the rules of the most exact harmony, and for that reason he might be reputed the most perfect colourist that has ever been.

C H A P. IV.

OF THE CLARE OBSCURE OF TITIAN.

MANY have pretended, that Titian invented a kind of particular Clare Obscure, which they say to be that which gives to his paintings the admirable effect which they have; but these deceive themselves in the same manner of others who make Correggio the best colourist. The generality of people in praising Titian say, that his figures appear of a living flesh, and in the same confess the excellence of his colouring. To pass encomiums on Correggio, they likewise say, that one might almost pass one's hand between the objects of his painting. And what has that to do with colouring? This one might do in a design, and the other upon the palate of colours. The peculiarity which Titian has in his Clare Obscure

scure, arises solely from his colouring; for knowing that shades lose the quality of their colours, and render them dark, he knew how to give them the tone which they ought to have, and by his knowledge in colouring, he made something of good in Clare Obscure. He likewise bestowed great attention in the imitation of nature, which he copied regularly; and since nature is so various, the same variety is to be found in his works; but he did not study it by the same principles of Correggio: he contented himself wholly by imitating it as he saw it, without adding any thing of the Ideal.

These my propositions are not to be taken rigorously, as if I would pretend to make Titian totally ignorant of Clare Obscure, and Correggio of Colouring; my intention is only to compare the merits of these great artists, and to discover the parts in which each has remained excellent; because in an art so extensive, as painting it is not possible that one sole limited understanding can embrace the whole in the same degree of perfection.

From whence, by all that which I have said, I do not mean that the aforesaid great painters were ignorant of any of the essential parts of the art; I mean only that each had some part in which he excelled more than in another.

Raphael for instance will appear to be arrived to the highest point of perfection in design, to him who does not consider the beautiful ancient statues which are superior to him. He who has not sufficient instruction will sometimes pre-

fer the *Clare Obscure* of Titian to that of Correggio; but as I ought to understand these things they could not persuade me in the same way.

C H A P. V.

OF THE IDEAL OF TITIAN.

TITIAN had very little Ideal in design. In *clare obscure* he had sufficient to understand nature; not however as much as Correggio, because his *clare obscure* is not so abundant and general. In colouring he was much more Ideal, by having well known the characters and degrees of each colour, as also the proper place in which to apply them. The science of placing a red cloth in preference to a blue one, &c. is not so easy as is imagined; and this is what Titian understood in the highest perfection. He likewise very well knew the harmony of colours, which is in part Ideal, and which one sees not in nature if it be not first comprehended in the imagination. I say the same of *clare obscure*; because the degradation of light has not in painting the same force as in Nature: the same happens to harmony and colours, where pure imitation serves as nothing.

As Titian has remained so excellent in this part, one might conclude, that he had much of the Ideal. With regard to invention he was very simple, and in general he thought not of it more than was absolutely necessary, and of course added nothing to it of the Ideal.

CHAP. VI.

OF THE COMPOSITION OF TITIAN.

His first Compositions were symmetrical, according to the manner of this time. His second style was a little more easy, but without any particular rule. In his last it appears that he scarce thought of what he composed, although by chance one here finds some expression. Many times he placed portraits in his paintings, and his compositions remained the more cold. If he composed any thing well, it was so rare as not to give him an habitual merit. Finally in this part he did no more than follow simple nature without observing the expression of the art.

PART THE FIFTH.

CHAP. I.

OF THE TASTE OF THE ANCIENTS.

HISTORIANS relate many things of the invention of the art of designing, but examining it well, all is such confusion that it appears as if they knew nothing of the matter. I believe it is impossible to know the true origin of the arts, because perhaps they have been invented at different times, and places, as has happened with printing, which invention is claimed by some cities of Europe, at the same time the Chinese pretend to have known it many ages before. It might have happened, that designing was invented at the same time in Greece, Egypt, and in Tuscany, or that some of these people had taken it from others; but there is no necessity for seeking this out, nor would the knowledge of it be of any considerable utility. For that reason I do not enter into this dispute, leaving

men of erudition to examine if there have been two or more cities of the same name, and in which of these has been born such an artist as has invented or perfected any point of the art. My object is to speak solely of the study of the ancients, and of the way they have taken to invent painting and sculpture; likewise of their Taste, and of the maxims by which I figure to myself they have been operated.

I incline to believe that design was the first found by men, and that painting and sculpture came after; that in the beginning they knew nothing of sculpture, and that painting was begun still later: that the first designs were the imitation of the human form: that in sculpture they began by forming earthly figures; and that this was the first step which the arts approached towards the imitation of nature; because of a thing which one sees at all sides it is more easy to express the form than even in design, which requires more reflection, and for that reason has less of mechanism than sculpture. However it may be, I do not hazard to decide upon that point; only I am persuaded that the ancients began the art of designing with forms very simple, long and straight, after the manner of the figures, which we see in the Tuscan Vases.

I imagine that Philosophy, and the other ornaments of the mind, flourished among the ancients before they cultivated sculpture and painting, and that for this reason they pursued a way totally different from the moderns; that is to say, they followed the direction of reason,

and not of practice and caprice; because we see they preferred the most necessary things to those which were less so; from whence they directed their first attention to the muscles, and the next to proportion, consisting in these two parts the most useful and necessary of the human form; and this is the character of their primitive Taste. All this one observes in histories and in the divine and human figures which they have represented, and one knows equally that those who applied themselves to the art of designing, were not ignorant people who worked only mechanically: they had likewise reason for their guide. We see that their vases are of an admirable form, and are executed with the highest delicacy and art; which was not to be done without much reflection and great study. In these figures one finds a proportion, impossible to be known and practised without an art which gives secure rules. These rules could not be founded otherwise than in proportion, which was invented and practised by the Greeks, who knew it from the beginning, taking it simply from the beautiful Nature of their time and country; and if they had accustomed themselves to work in that part without rule, like the moderns, they would have made (at least from error) some heads varied and different: but we see there is a proportion observed in the whole.

In the second epoch they began to know that this uniformity of rule produced a dry and mechanical Taste; therefore they aggrandized

their style by giving to their figures an air of nobleness, which could not pass for magnificence. They extended the members more than they had done before: they conserved however the straight lines, and thus fell into a taste rather heavy, although not of bad style, because the dryness of the first being abandoned, this was of course by that much better. Of this second style we see some Tuscan statues as, for example, the Tuscan Amazon, which is rough and heavy, but notwithstanding of good character. One might infer that the Greeks of that Epoch followed the same track, as far as we can learn from the few monuments which have remained of that time. Their foreheads are flat; their noses squared, their brows much marked, and and their lips cut almost straight. All this proves what I assert, and one might see it confirmed among other statues in the MINERVA MEDICA, of the palace of Giustiniani, whose simplicity of contours makes me believe that it was a work of that second epoch.

The statues composing the group of the fable of Niobe appear to me to imitate others done when the taste of Greece was a little more refined. The proportions are of the best perfection; the forms are sublime, and appear of great beauty, but they want notwithstanding a certain softness which was not known till times much posterior to that. On account of their lines being too straight they make too many angles. In short they want that sublime elegance, and that contour so perfectly varied, which

one admires in other Grecian statues; such as in the Apollo, the Gladiator, the Venus, and in the Ganymede. I conjecture that the aforesaid statues of Niobe were anterior to Alexander the Great, because they have not beautiful drapery, and because one discovers that their authors thought only of avoiding the dryness of the first style, and the heaviness of the second.

In the time of Alexander, or a little after, they arrived to the highest perfection in the art, by giving more motion to their contours, and by taking from the stone that rudeness occasioned by uniform lines and angles. In a word, the able sculptors began to study the flesh. It was then that sculpture ceased to be an imperfect art, and became united to the true imitation of Nature.

I take it upon me to say that sculpture owes this last effort to painting, because before the progress which it made in the School of Pamphilus it was not arrived to true perfection. Then appeared Apelles his disciple, who fixed the attention and taste of his age, by abolishing minutiae and dryness. He said of other painters, that each was excellent in some part, but that GRACE was properly his, and that he knew how much he had to give to complete a work. He did not say this to show that he was fond of negligence but to show that he knew how to omit things which ought to be omitted; and that if other painters possessed some parts of perfection, he possessed the union of the whole.

I have said this in order to explain better my proposition, because I believe that when sculptors saw the elegance and grace of the works of Apelles and his contemporaries, they opened their eyes, and introduced in their Art that admirable taste which has produced such prodigies of beauty. Painting likewise then acquired more reputation, because Philip, father of Alexander, made a law in consideration of Pamphilus, ordering that painting should not be taught to any but free persons, which in his time signified Nobles. From that, Painters became to be more esteemed; and the great fortunes which they acquired supplied their wants to perfect this beautiful profession, which until then was rather rare, and sculpture was more common.

Until the time of Alexander, the arts always continued increasing, and afterwards; although they were very much extended, yet nothing was added to their perfection. This age resembled that of Raphael, in the which one sees on a sudden such beautiful productions, as neither before or after the revival of the Arts were ever more to be seen; and although afterwards have been found the methods to improve some parts, yet there have been none, who, upon the whole, have been able to equal the great men of that time.

From the age of Alexander even to the destruction of the Arts with the Grecian Empire, they always went on acquiring some new ornament, but in the trifling and useless parts; whilst the ancients of the good time applied themselves

only to the principal parts, without regarding to study the fineness of the hair, or such like minuteness, being engaged only to perfect the imitation of the naked; nor in general did they lose so much time in the drapery as we do.

It is certain that in times posterior to the liberty of Greece, there have been some sculptors who in part have equalled the great men of Antiquity; and sometimes in the soft, and fleshy taste have surpassed them; yet notwithstanding they will never compare with the first, because they have not had imaginations so sublime, or ideas so elevated as had the Artists of that happy age, when opulence and liberty fired their talents, and nourished their ideas excellent and divine.

As the Empire encreased, the Arts of Greece came to Rome; but I know not how much they flourished there, not finding one good statue with the name of a Latin Author. Perhaps the Roman Artists, like many moderns, affected to put their names in a learned language. Who knows that? I however incline to believe that that Nation did not cultivate the Arts to such a degree as to be able to leave us monuments of admiration. We have a great number of statues which we believe to be of Roman Taste; or at least if they were found in Greece, they did not merit the trouble of being conveyed to Rome. But in the major part of them one distinguishes, the character of the nation by the heads, and the greater part of the busts, under the effegies of Gladiators and Soldiers; besides

that, their style is harsh, which one sees in all their portraits, and particularly in those which were done in the times nearest to the beautiful taste of Greece, which are those of Cesar, Augustus, and also of the Anterior Consuls. In short even to the time of Nero the Arts shone little in Rome; and when they flourished more in the time of Trajan and Adrian, I believe that the good artists were all Grecians, as one sees by their style, which even in its weakness preserved still the good maxims of antiquity, that is to say, simplicity of the contours, totallity of the proportions, and the beautiful characters of the heads.

The Sicilians had also the Grecian good taste, and preserv'd it for a long time, without however touching perfection, because they were less correct than the Grecians, and more rotund and loaded, nor ever arrived to work marble with the same fineness and polish.

Antiquarians have erred in searching perfection where it cannot be, which is, in engraved stones. That which they could profit themselves by in this was only in the style with which they were executed. The authors could, there only discover beauty in that which was easy, and in avoiding difficulty, by which they would have fallen into Error.

But returning to the works of the Romans, I maintain that their monuments which have remained, and which we know to have been much esteemed in their time, are not executed with the highest finish, and all their art is reduced to a beautiful and noble facility. The deca-

dence of the Art in Rome might have arisen from the multitude of Artists, who by being very common fell into disrepute, and from their not esteeming in the most flourishing time of Rome any other profession than that of a Soldier, of consequence the professors of Designing being little respected, became to study little, and to treat their art as a kind of mechanical and vile trade, worthy only of slaves and miserable people; and in this manner it decayed even to total ruin, being destroyed by the revolutions of the Empire, the wars, invasions of the Barbarians, change of religion, and by abolishing of the Images; thus they gave the last stab to good taste, and destroyed the beautiful things left by the Ancients.

Yet, notwithstanding the world owes to the Greeks of that miserable and oppressed Country, the preservation of the Arts, and the revival of them; because they transported for the second time painting into Italy, and there it began anew to be cultivated and improved by the Florentines, Venitians, and by the people of Lombardy, even to Raphael, Titian, and Correggio, who carried it to the highest degree of perfection, and from which point, it returned anew to fall into decay even to the present time, and we shall see its entire ruin if we proceed on the way hitherto continued. This is in short what I think of the invention, progress, and decline of the Arts. Now I shall speak of their beauty, and particularly of that which I have observed in the first, second, and third epoch of Antiquity.

In the beginning there was but one Taste only, which was deformed and vulgar. The Egyptians fixed it there, nor ever improved it, because the nature of their country was not capable of sustaining their ideas of perfection, either in beauty, or proportion.

The Grecians, and the Tuscans, were the first who discovered the proportions. They soon knew that a part which was supported by another ought to be lighter than that which supported it. From thence they inferred, that if a hand, a foot, or a head was very large it was deformed; they reflected that every body ought to have the property and capacity of performing all its motions with facility, and that every motion is exercised by the joints, and therefore they applied themselves to observe that the neck unites the arms, as also the thigh the legs, and to these the feet and toes; and reflecting on the manner of the force and graduation, and of the actions and motions of these parts, they acquired the idea of the legerity and ease which one observes in the Tuscan figures. They knew that the force of the posture of a figure began from below, and rose gradually, because the foot sustains the leg, that the thigh upon which is placed the trunk; and thus philosophising upon it, they found that there ought to be a certain proportion between the length and thickness of these parts. Then proceeding further they found, that in all the members of the body, there were two contrary movements, one of action, and the other of re-

pose; that is, the force which operates, and that which sustains; and that to signify the first, ease and legerity in the extremities, were necessary, and that for the second they ought to be more solid and robust, and of course they made the extremity a little longer; but since thickness of parts can degenerate into heaviness, they proved that true ease was derived from the proportion of the members with the joints, and thus they saw the necessity of making long folds, as effectually one sees in all the best ancient statues of that time, and by applying all these observations to that which they saw in the beautiful nature of their country, they established rules grounded upon reason.

From this I am of opinion that we owe the knowledge of beautiful proportion to the best artists of the first epoch of the art. In the second they conserved all the proportions of length which were first established; but having seen that that taste was too dry and ordinary, they began to change it by making the joints something straighter, and shorter, with which they introduced also more grandeur and softness.

With all that they found not the mode of entirely correcting their dryness, because by avoiding the straight lines, they mixed with them the convex, and knew not how to wave them.

The works which we have of that epoch, appear as if they were strangled in their birth, because where they found two convex lines they formed an angle of great profundity, and by that this

style appears to be cut off in the beginning. This use of convex lines was not however absolute, or general, because they only served to combine the straight lines, the one for the things which incline outwards, and the other for those which incline inwards. I mean to say that where the entrance ought to be more powerful, there they placed a curve more rapid; and where they wished to extend much, there they lengthened the straight line. This was taken from the first style, and one sees it clearly in the characters which they gave to the heads, and in which they formed a straight line from the root of the hair even to the point of the nose. They lowered the little parts to exalt the great ones, subjecting themselves only to the general forms. This one might observe in the heads of Jove, the aforefaid Minerva, and in others of that time, where the artists have used much the straight lines and angles, and have been attentive to the principal parts, omitting the lesser ones. They made the forehead plain: from the root of the hair, as I have said, even to the point of the nose, all is a direct line. The superior surface is all plain, and from thence to the upper lip it forms a direct angle. The two sides are also plain, and the nostrils are scarcely marked, not to interrupt the principal form, which they composed of two lateral triangles, and one plain upon the superior part; nor did they mark the bone of the nostrils: from that, even to the most prominent part of the upper lip they made another plain,

almost as long as that of the nose, which give^s a certain air of gravity and nobility. I believe they would have made also the under lip of the same form, if nature had not made it so different; because I see that they endeavoured to accommodate it to their taste, by making the ascent from the chin to the mouth almost a straight line, and at the highest part of the lip, they repeated the same flatness. To the chin they also gave the same flat form; to the cheeks the same, except where the bones of the face play; and in this way all the other parts, by expressing the great, uniform, and simple, and omitting the small parts; and from all that they established fixed rules which they never departed from, and thus they formed the second degree of perfection, or epoch of Taste.

In the third, or best time of the art, the ancients perfected their style; being convinced, that in the two preceding they did not duly express the effect of the flesh; because in the first it appeared too nervous, and in the second much swelled and vulgar: and lastly, they knew that in beautiful nature was to be found continued variety; that nothing ought to be repeated; that it was necessary to pass from the convex line to the concave and straight line, and make a mixture between them: that in the plain and angular parts of the second style, it was necessary to unite the concave with the convex, and where variety was wanting, all the three species of lines ought to appear; and they found the reason why one ought not to make any

angle without a curve, and no curve without interruption or inflexion; that is, without waved or serpentine lines. They remarked that no contraction ought to be opposed by others similar, or no extention contrary to another; that no line ought to be of the same proportion or character as the opposite of the other part; and lastly, that there ought to be a continued variety in all the contours and proportions.

These rules could not conduce to the error of artists, being founded on the good practice of of the style preceding; because the first had explained the good proportions, and the second had banished all minutiae, and useless parts; the third did not tend to any other than to arrive to the accomplishment of the art, which consists in variety, and which is the soul of things; because variety produces in our sight the effect which nature makes in motion; and a sole form makes a sole effect, by taking away the idea of motion; whilst many and various forms take away the considerations of the durability, and stability of things. A single line upon paper does not attract our attention, but many, if they have a certain proportion, fix one to contemplate them with delight: the same happens with a beautiful painting, or with a beautiful statue, which the more one reviews it, the more the eye comprehends the variety of the forms, and finds more pleasure in it, appearing more animated. A uniform thing to the contrary, does not move the sight, but appears dead; and our genius finding in it nothing

new, is soon tired and disgusted with it. It is this variety which characterises the excellent works of the ancients, and gives them that beauty so difficult to be acquired. This variety constitutes all the difference that there is between the ancients and the moderns. Not that the last have not endeavoured to give variety to their works, but they have made it too sensible and studied; and by force of wishing to add much, they have become deficient, and have been constrained to make repetitions. The ancients divided the passage of the straight line to the most curved, for example, in a hundred degrees; and they availed of this in a manner almost invisible: the moderns begin by a spring, placing, as one might say the first degree at number 50, from whence they cannot have such variety as the ancients, not having but half of the degrees and the forms.

This is but a general insinuation of the many I could give upon the Taste of the ancients. Now it remains with me to speak of their painting in particular, comparing it at the same time with sculpture, and considering it by the degrees and parts which that art requires; and I will say what I think that they knew, and that which they were ignorant of. I will not forget however that I examine the works of men, and that human nature is compatible with defects.

Since we cannot think of two things at a time, our actions are all separate and successive; the memory is that which unites them; so that when a

man loses that power, he loses the whole; because human knowledge is no more than a combination of things. For that reason it is so difficult in the beginning of a work to have present all the parts, and to remember at the end, that which one thought at the beginning, to combine the whole. This makes painting and sculpture so difficult, requiring, both the one and the other, thought and execution. The first, nevertheless, has in that some advantage over the second; because a sculptor, to put in execution all his ideas, is in want of many manual operations to strengthen the genius, which becomes otherwise debilitated, and cools before the hand can terminate the execution of the thing conceived.

The painter, by a little stroke of the pencil, which is almost as quick as thought, can manifest his idea. The sculptor performs his work by degrees, nor can give it beauty so quick as the painter, because that which in the one is the last thing, is in the other the first; that is to say, perfection of the form as painting begins by the contours, which is the end and completion of Sculpture. Nevertheless, modern painters have not been able to approach the perfection of ancient sculpture; and the reason I believe is, because the customs of our time are different, and the painter has occasion to explain quickly, and to expose his paintings much sooner than he ought to do. If Raphael had wished to express all the perfection of which he was capable, he would not have left perhaps

more than one painting in place of the many which he painted during his short life.

In Sculpture one finds also this reasoning, because we have not been able to arrive to the perfection of the ancients, notwithstanding we know how to work the marble as well as them; and it is because the beginners are constrained to work to gain their livelihood; and the amateurs who give them work know not how to distinguish for what good use or end a statue is made, and they order works of him who is also in the necessity of studying the mode of making it. These accustom themselves thus to pure practice, and to that false brilliancy, which is the delight of the wealthy, who are generally speaking the most ignorant. Thus no more statues are made by the order of Philosophers, or an entire city, but for the simple caprice of a powerful fool for whom a bad sculptor is better than a good one. In ancient times one beautiful statue only was sufficient to secure the reputation and fortune of an Artist; but at present fifty bad ones are not sufficient to give him bread to eat; and as perfection in Sculpture is seen more at the end than at the beginning our Sculptors are constrained to leave their works imperfect; and thus men habituating themselves to vice and evil with such facility, it results that the sight of the same professors accustom itself to a depraved Taste in our days.

From all that I conclude that the moderns for various reasons are inferior to the ancients,

and that the sculpture of our time is also inferior to painting. They finish the last at present too hastily, without consideration, and without science; and sculpture first without good rules of proportions, and without intelligence in the end; whilst the ancients used in the beginning the best proportions, and afterwards the lines most proper to noble expression, rejecting superfluity and minuteness, and finally perfecting all with reasoned variety.

The ancient painters did the same by different means. They kept their works long in hand to increase by degrees their perfection. They began by exactness of the proportions, and by the principal forms of the contours, carrying on the consideration in the great and little parts, even to the utmost delicacy. We read in history, that no person was found so hardy as to undertake to finish the Venus which Apelles left at his death incomplete; not because others knew not how to make an arm or a leg, but because that painting, although only sketched, appeared finished to him who knew not as much as Apelles.

Painting was at that time an Art which was learnt and exercised as a science. They began by dividing the lines in ten parts for example, then in twenty, then forty, eighty, &c.; and with that delicacy and repartition of lines they gave infinite variety to their works. They varied the same parts of their lines, making for instance one of three, another of five, and another of two, so that they formed the contours varied, but united in the different lines; and from all that arises

their perfection. They did not observe these rules only in the contours, but applied them also to the interior forms, to the extremities of light, and to the points of greater force. He who knows how to view the ancients with this attention, will not be surpris'd that Protogenes employed so many years to paint the sole figure of his Jalisus, because he who like him would observe so many rules and reasons, will be obliged to study much and to contemplate his work many times, part by part; so that as I have said before, the reason which hinders a painter from giving perfection to his works is the want of memory; and the Ancients knowing that, afforded themselves time: and neither would this resource have been sufficient for them if they had not known how to reduce things to the method of dividing the art in principal and little parts, and how to execute them by degrees one after another, and for that reason they could not acquire the great variety which they employed in their works without long time and patience, and this variety gave the finish and perfection to their proportions.

Thus end the general maxims of the ancients. I shall now proceed to the particular rules which they used in design, composition, colouring, and in the Ideal.

C H A P. II.

OF THE DESIGN OF THE ANCIENTS.

I HAVE said that the ancients had three different styles or manners; that is to say, the dry, the great, and the beautiful; but I shall speak solely of the last, which is the only one worthy of being imitated.

To examine it I shall take four of the most famous statues; the Apollo for elegance and ease, the Laocoon for the cholerick kind, the Hercules for the robust, and the Gladiator for simplicity; adding the Torso of Belvedere for the sublime, because in this the Ideal is united with Beauty and Truth.

In the Apollo one sees expression, nobleness, and all the other attributes of perfection; but for the present, I shall speak only of Design. Viewing therefore this statue with the reflections which we have made upon the difference between Painting and Sculpture, we shall find elegance, union, harmony of contours, and a predominant character so perfectly executed, that there is no difference in the character of one contour and that of another; nor that of one form or another, from the greatest even to the least extremity of a toe. When I say that the forms are uniform, I mean that if a convex form is great, all the forms of the figure ought to be

convex also; and the same I mean by the concave and the straight line; and since all the lines of the contours are composed of these three, there can be no other difference between these contours than that of the character which they give them. For example the Apollo is composed all of very soft convex lines, of obtuse angles sufficiently small, and of plains, but still the smooth convex is most prevalent. As the character of this divine figure ought to express force, nobleness, and delicacy, its Author has represented the first by convex contours; the second by their uniformity, and the third by waved lines. The obtuse angles and light inflexions form the waved line, and by their union discover the sufficient force and nobleness.

In the Laocoon the convex lines govern, and the forms are angular as much when they were contracted as when they are distended, by which means one marks the alteration there is in the expression, so that in this manner one renders more visible the nerves and the tendons of the figure, which are strongly strained. The straight lines meeting with the concave and convex, form the angles by which one discovers that the figure is altered.

The Sculptor of the Hercules imagined a Taste entirely different, because he made the muscles of a convex and rotund form, in order to show that it was real flesh, but he made the contractions plain to show also that they were nervous and thin parts, and by that expressed the character of force and robustness. This is more vi-

fible when confronted with the modern legs which have been applied to him, and which the sculptor has made of muscles so hard and so strained, that they appear not flesh, but cords.

The Gladiator evinces a mixture of the form of the Hercules, and the Laocoon, because the muscles, which are in action, are altered, and those which are in repose are short and round, like those of Hercules. This variety is conformable to Nature.

The Torso of Belvidere is a work merely Ideal. Here we find reunited all the beauty of the other statues, because it has a variety so perfect that it is almost imperceptible. One cannot discern its flat parts but by comparing them with those rotund: and thus vice versa. There are fewer angles than plains and curves, nor would these be distinguishable if they had not the little areas of which they were composed. This famous Athenian author would, in my opinion have obtained the most beautiful taste that imagination could aspire to, if he had been as perfect in the parts deficient as in those which we see. Yet I do not confide in myself sufficient to assure it, since I know other statues which have some parts excellent and are very ordinary in the rest. The name of that Appollonius is not to be found in ancient history, if it be not him who was never content with his works, and after having finished them always destroyed them. Notwithstanding that, I believe that the ancients made a great account of that statue, because by the iron clamps which it has in the hinder part, one knows that it has been repaired. It ap-

pears that it represented an Hercules, as it indicates the tail of a Lion; and according to the character it must represent that hero as already deified; because one does not distinguish in the body any of those veins which the ancients marked in their human figures; as the cave vein of the interior of the thigh, that of the lower belly, and others which pass by the breast. By this I incline to believe that he was leaning upon his club, and not spinning, as some pretend. This digression upon sculpture is not out of rule, because treating of design, arises from that art the contours, and forms which are equally necessary in painting.

Returning then to painting, I am entirely persuaded, that the design of the ancient painters was much more perfect than that of the Sculptors. First for the elegance and readiness, which I have already said to be greater in the execution of painting than in sculpture; and secondly by reason of the esteem in which the famous painters were held more than the sculptors: nor might that be without a strong motive, treating of judges so enlightened, and of tastes so exquisite as were among the Greeks.

The expressions used by historians as encomiums to the merit, and delicacy of ancient painters appear as hyperboles, and incredible to him who does not combine things well. There have been moderns, who in reading the memoirs of the marvellous abilities with which some painters expressed the character of people of Athens, have imagined that it was by means of Hierogly-

phics and emblems, and by force of expression and design; which would be repugnant to the truth of the History.

What is certain is, that we do not see these delicate expressions in their statues; from whence I believe that the painting of the ancients surpassed by much their sculpture. The grace and beauty of an Helen, and of a Venus of Apelles, could not be the effect of any thing else but an admirable excellence of the contours. It appears clear that the celebrated dispute between Apelles and Protogenes was only a difference about the contours, according to the mode which I have before explained; that is to say, the first delineated a contour of a divided member in three forms; the second showed that he could give greater variety by dividing it into four; and Apelles still added another new line, giving the very last variety and perfection to the same contour. If it had not been thus, it would not have been possible that this disputed line could have merited such attention, and the regard of men of so learned and refined a Taste as the Historians certify.

The ancients certainly knew foreshortening, otherwise it was not possible that Apelles could have been able to paint Alexander in the figure of thundering Jove with the thunderbolt in his hand which is raised, in a manner that they say it appears to come forth from the painting.

Neither could the paintings of battles have been executed without the knowledge of foreshortening, because the figures would have ap-

peared lame and ridiculous.* In short I think the design of the ancients was much superior to that of the moderns; because among the ancient paintings that I have seen, many are as well designed as the best of Raphael, notwithstanding they were done at Rome in the times when the Grecian taste was a little vanished; and nevertheless the sculpture of the same time was much inferior to the aforesaid paintings; so that by the little which remains of ancient painting, one might infer that it was always more perfect than the contemporary sculpture.

CHAP. III.

OF THE CLARE OBSCURE OF THE ANCIENTS.

I am of opinion that the ancients had not so just an idea of Clare Obscure as we have; and that they possessed that part which requires

* This point remains definitively decided if one is advertised of that which Pliny relates of Pausias libro xxxv. cap. ii: ANTE OMNIA CUM LONGITUDINEM BOVIS OSTENDERE VELLET, ADVERSUM EUM PINXIT, NON TRANSVERSUM, UNDER ABUNDE INTELLIGITUR AMPLITUDO.

imitation, and not the Ideal. To deceive the imagination of spectators with an effect of Truth, cannot be obtained without a true *Clare Obscure*, which the ancients certainly had; but for that it is not necessary to possess the ideal: it is sufficient to be exact in imitating nature.

C H A P. IV.

OF THE COLOURING OF THE ANCIENTS.

WE find in history, that among the ancients were to be found good and bad colourists, which happens among the moderns. Zeuxis, and Apelles ought to have been brilliant in that part, according to what is related of them; and by the colouring to which those authors refer, it proves that the ancients had a just idea of it; but perhaps they did not arrive to analyze that point as much as us. The choice of the colouring of their drapery was very good, according to what we see by the relics which remain of them. They painted in a very finished style, without omitting any thing necessary. We have the figure of triumphant Rome painted (as is supposed) in the time of Constantine, which has a

very good tone of colouring, and although it is a painting rather ill designed, one sees that it is not so bad by far as the sculpture of the arch of that Emperor, executed in his time. . . .

The remainder is wanting.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

REVEREND MEMBERS

very good tone of coloring, and although it is
a painting rather than a sculpture, one feels that it is
not so bad by far as the sculpture of the arch of
that emperor, executed in the year 66

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The remainder is missing.

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